

Published in Pelican Books 1938

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
HAZELL, WATSON & VINEY, LTD., LONDON AND AYLESBUR

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOL. II

### CHAPTER V

	PAGE
GRAND INQUEST INTO THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF LONDON	263

Charles Booth. The scope of his enquiry—the four million inhabitants of London. Methods of investigation. The use of the census papers as a statistical framework. The method of wholesale interviewing. The School Attendance Officers as witnesses. The verification of the data. The eight-fold classification of the people according to degrees of poverty. The degradation of overcrowded tenements in mean streets. The poverty maps. The difficulty of classification according to occupation. Charles Booth a pioneer in method. The political effect of the Grand Inquest. The “thirty per cent.” in poverty. Destitution and a high birth-rate. The irrelevance of charity. “Individualism in the arms of socialism versus socialism in the arms of individualism.”

### CHAPTER VI

SERVATION AND EXPERIMENT [1884–1890; æt. 26–32]	306
---	-----

The management of working-class dwellings. An experiment in housing; the sacrifice of decency to economical and sanitary structure. Its effect on manners and morals. The failure of the experiment. The dead point in my career. A divided personality. Mental misery. The revival of the religious spirit. A disciplined life. Essays in social theory. Herbert Spencer as a critic. Studies in East End life. Labour at the docks. The sweating system. Learning to “sweat.” I seek employment. Evidence before the Lords Committee on Sweating. Disagreeable consequences. The Lords Report. My definition of the sweating system: “all labour engaged in manufacture escaping regulation by Factory Acts and Trade Unions” The absence of a “responsible” employer. A science of society. All administration is experimental. The fallacy of a “Natural” order of society. Can the scientific method determine ends as well as means?



# CONTENTS

PAGE

## CHAPTER VII

WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST [1888-1892; æt. 30-34]	393
---	-----

The Industrial Revolution: a stupendous success and a tragic failure. The popular ideal of self-employment as a substitute for the dictatorship of the capitalist. The alternative problem of the woman worker. Professor Marshall's advice. My false step in signing the appeal against the suffrage—why I was an anti-feminist. The Co-operative Movement—co-operative theory and co-operative practice. John Mitchell and the Co-operative Wholesale Society. The failure of the "self-governing workshop." The success of the Consumers' Co-operative Movement. The sphere of vocational organisation in the government of industry. A dual control by consumers and producers. Foreign trade may come to consist of reciprocal imports. Conclusions. My father's last illness. His call for another son-in-law. The man of my destiny. Courting the "clear and analytic mind!" My Apprenticeship ends: Our Partnership begins.

APPENDIX . . . . .	464
--------------------	-----

(A) Personal Observation and Statistical Enquiry.  
(See p. 337).

(B) The Method of the Interview. (See p. 387.)

(C) The Art of Note-taking. (See p. 403.)

(D) On the Nature of Economic Science. (See p. 340.)

(1) My Objections to a Self-contained, Separate,  
Abstract Political Economy.

(2) A Theory of Value.

(E) Why the Self-governing Workshop has failed.  
(See p. 427.)

INDEX . . . . .	499
-----------------	-----

## CHAPTER V

### A GRAND INQUEST INTO THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF LONDON

So far, I have described as my intellectual environment the then closely interrelated worlds of politics and metropolitan philanthropy. I now come to a great enterprise which aroused my whole-hearted sympathy and admiration; an enterprise in which I played the minor part of an industrious apprentice. Here the impulse came neither from politics nor from philanthropy, but from scientific curiosity; from the desire to apply the method of observation, reasoning and verification to the problem of poverty in the midst of riches.

Now, every man is apt to overrate the significance of an event with which he has been intimately associated. But the grand inquest into the conditions of life and labour of the four million inhabitants of the richest city in the world—an investigation carried on by Charles Booth (entirely at his own expense) over a period of seventeen years and published in as many volumes—seems to me to stand out as a landmark alike in social politics and in economic science. Prior to this enquiry, neither the individualist nor the Socialist could state with any approach to accuracy what exactly was the condition of the people of Great Britain. Hence the unreality of their controversy. And if, as I am inclined to believe, a subtle combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis is a necessary factor in social studies, it may well be that Charles Booth's elaborate plan of wide statistical verification of data obtained by detailed observa-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

tion of individual families and social institutions will be recognised as an indispensable basis of sociological science. In comparison with the preceding generations of social researchers, I suggest that his method of analysis constitutes, if not the starting-point, certainly the first sign-post directing the student on one of the main ways to discovery. Unfortunately Charles Booth, partly owing to his modesty and partly owing to his voluminous output, failed, like so many other successful organisers, to describe his own plan of campaign; and for this reason I do not hesitate to attempt to sketch into my picture this eminent Victorian and his work.

In the short and modest memoir by his wife<sup>1</sup> we are given in bare outline the circumstance of his birth and breeding. We are introduced into the family circle of the Booths, Fletchers, Cromptons and Holts, for the most part Liverpool merchants and shipowners, Liberals or Radicals in political opinion, and Unitarian by religious conviction. We are told that he lived at home with his brothers and sisters, getting his education at the first-grade secondary day school of the Royal Institution of Liverpool; and passing, whilst yet in his teens, into a business career through the office of Messrs. Lamport & Holt; spending his leisure either in study or in disputatious talk within the large family circle of brothers, sisters, and cousins; or engaging in enthusiastic propaganda as a member of the newly formed Birmingham Education League, with its programme of universal secular education; or, through his friendship

<sup>1</sup> *Charles Booth—A Memoir* (Macmillan, 1918) [by Mrs. Charles Booth]. Shipowner and merchant by profession, Charles Booth became in later life a Privy Councillor, F.R.S., and Honorary Doctor of Oxford, Cambridge and Liverpool. He married Mary, daughter of Charles Zachary Macaulay (brother of the historian), and granddaughter of my own grandfather, Richard Potter, M.P. for Wigan.

## A GRAND INQUEST

with working men, taking thought about the affairs of the Liverpool Trades Council. One has a vision of a group of families living simple and strenuous lives, with a high standard of work, and small requirements in the way of games, sport and less desirable forms of pleasure. Nor was the higher thought neglected; for, owing to his intimacy with his two cousins Harry and Albert Crompton, leading members of the "Church of Humanity," Charles Booth came under the influence of Auguste Comte. Perpetually discussing the philosophy of Positivism and the social theories arising out of it with such leading Positivists as Dr. Bridges and Professor Beesly, the Frederic Harrisons and the Lushingtons, Charles Booth—to quote the words of the *Memoir*—"was fairly captivated, and his formal adhesion to the ranks of Positivism was held to be only a matter of time"—an expectation which was not fulfilled; for "his nature, though enthusiastic, had many needs, many aspirations difficult to satisfy, and not easily combined within the limits of any formal body of doctrine." In 1871 he married the attractive and accomplished daughter of Charles Macaulay, who happened to be my cousin, and who had met him for the first time at the house of my eldest sister, the wife of R. D. Holt.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, his multifarious

<sup>1</sup> Robert Durning Holt, who married my eldest sister Laurencina in 1867, was the youngest of five brothers of a remarkable family, Unitarians and Liberals, which for a whole generation dominated the management of two great and successful shipping companies of Liverpool, took a prominent part in the municipal life, and were munificent benefactors of the local University. My brother-in-law was a member of the Royal Commission on London Government, 1893-94. He was probably the only man who found himself actually gazetted as a baronet against his will, his humorous letter of refusal having been taken by Lord Rosebery as an acceptance. Reinforced by the indignant protests of his wife (who vehemently objected, as a good Radical, to all social inequalities) he insisted on the honour being cancelled.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

activities, carried on from early morning to late at night, whether in the shipowning venture which he started with his brother, or in political propaganda or continuous reading, caused a severe breakdown in health, which necessitated some years abroad, and a long period of inability to work or even to read.

It was during the period of his convalescence, I think in the late 'seventies, that my cousin brought her husband for the first time to stay with us. I recall with some amusement the impression made on a girl's mind by this interesting new relative. Nearing forty years of age, tall, abnormally thin, garments hanging as if on pegs, the complexion of a consumptive girl, and the slight stoop of the sedentary worker, a prominent aquiline nose, with moustache and pointed beard barely hiding a noticeable Adam's apple, the whole countenance dominated by a finely-moulded brow and large, observant grey eyes, Charles Booth was an attractive but distinctly queer figure of a man. One quaint sight stays in my mind: Cousin Charlie sitting through the family meals, "like patience on a monument smiling at"—other people eating, whilst, as a concession to good manners, he occasionally picked at a potato with his fork or nibbled a dry biscuit. Fascinating was his un-selfconscious manner and eager curiosity to know what you thought and why you thought it; what you knew and how you had learnt it. And there was the additional interest of trying to place this strange individual in the general scheme of things. No longer young, he had neither failed nor succeeded in life, and one was left in doubt whether the striking unconventionality betokened an initiating brain or a futile eccentricity. Observed by a stranger, he might have passed for a self-educated idealistic compositor or engineering draughtsman; or as the wayward member of an aristocratic family of the

## A GRAND INQUEST

Auberon Herbert type; or as a university professor; or, clean shaven and with the appropriate collar, as an ascetic priest, Roman or Anglican; with another change of attire, he would have "made up" as an artist in the Quartier Latin. The one vocation which seemed ruled out, alike by his appearance and by his idealistic temperament, was that of a great captain of industry pushing his way, by sheer will-power and methodical industry, hardened and sharpened by an independent attitude towards other people's intentions and views—except as circumstances which had to be wisely handled—into new countries, new processes and new business connections. And yet this kind of adventurous and, as it turned out, successful profit-making enterprise proved to be his destiny, bringing in its train the personal power and free initiative due to a large income generously spent.

Though I gather from the *Memoir* that business organisation was the career of his choice,<sup>1</sup> Charles Booth had also the scientific impulse, in his case directed towards the structure and working of society. Without the specific genius

<sup>1</sup> The attitude of Charles Booth towards profit-making enterprise is described in the *Memoir*. "Those who imagined that a business life must be dull, wanting in the interest and charm attending political, literary, or scientific pursuits, filled him with amazement. To him the living forces that stir the great pendulum of trade; the hazards to be incurred in new portions of the work of a great concern; the sharp reminders of failure given by the actual loss of money when any undertaking had been begun too rashly, or conducted with insufficient insight; above all, the contact with a set of men working towards one end, and in hourly touch with the realities of existence: all this delighted and absorbed him" (p. 93).

A significant and well-documented analysis of his outlook on public affairs after twenty years of successful business and sociological investigation is given in the chapter on Business, pp. 93–103, and in that on Industrial Policy, pp. 155–171, in the *Memoir* by his wife.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton for imaginative hypothesis and for verification by observation, experiment and reasoning, he likened these two great scientists in possessing, in a high degree, the scientific temperament: an overpowering curiosity about the nature of things; originality in designing ways and means of research; and above all, a splendid courage and persistency in the pursuit of knowledge. Further, Charles Booth was singularly appreciative of any suggestions, however irrelevant or far-fetched these might seem, from fellow-workers and subordinates. In the prime of life he delighted in upsetting generally accepted views, whether the free-trade orthodoxy of Manchester capitalism, at that time in the ascendant, or the cut and dried creed of the Marxian socialist. Indeed, if he had a bias as an investigator, it was in favour of the unlikely and unpopular explanation of a given series of facts. And combined with intellectual curiosity was the positivist conception of the service of man. In short, Charles Booth was, within my circle of friends, perhaps the most perfect embodiment of what I have described in a former chapter as the mid-Victorian time-spirit—the union of faith in the scientific method with the transference of the emotion of self-sacrificing service from God to man.

I will end this slight sketch of Charles Booth's personality by an entry from my diary giving a glimpse of these favourite cousins as I knew them in the first years of intimacy.

The last six weeks spent in London, with friends and sisters. The Booths' house dark and airless, but the inmates exceedingly charming and lovable. Mary, really a remarkable woman, with an unusual power of expression, and a well-trained and cultivated mind. She makes one feel, in spite of her appreciative and almost flattering attitude, "a very ignoramus." To me there is a slight narrowness in her literary judgements; they are too correct, too resting on authority? hardly the result of original thought?

## A GRAND INQUEST

Perhaps it is this very orderliness of mind and deference to authority which make her so attractive as a woman; for, added to this culture and polish of the intellect, there is a deep vein of emotion, of almost passionate feeling.

Charlie Booth has a stronger and clearer reason, with a singular absence of bias and prejudice. It is difficult to discover the presence of any vice or even weakness in him. Conscience, reason and dutiful affection, are his great qualities; other characteristics are not observable by the ordinary friend. He interests me as a man who has his nature completely under control; who has passed through a period of terrible illness and weakness, and who has risen out of it, uncynical, vigorous and energetic in mind, and without egotism. Many delightful conversations I had with these two charming cousins, generally acting as a listening third to their discussions. [MS. diary, February 9, 1882.]

### POVERTY IN THE MIDST OF RICHES

It pleases me to find in the *Memoir* by his wife, confirmed by his own words, that Charles Booth, in selecting the subject for investigation, was influenced by exactly the currents of thought and feeling, notably the controversies in the worlds of politics and philanthropy, which I have described in the foregoing pages as determining my own choice of a field for research.

Settled in London, where he had opened a branch of his shipowning and merchant business, he became aware of the new ferment.

People's minds were very full of the various problems connected with the position of the poor, and opinions the most diverse were expressed, remedies of the most contradictory nature were proposed [we are told by the author of the *Memoir*]. The works of Ruskin, the labours of Miss Octavia Hill, the principles and practice of the C.O.S., all contributed to the upheaval of thought and feeling. The simple, warm-hearted and thoughtless benevolence of former ages was held up to reprobation. . . . In the opinion of some, the great evils to be met were improvidence and self-indulgence. To relieve from the consequences of these was to aggravate the mischief. Yet another view was held, that the selfishness and vice of low lives were the result of the



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

selfishness and vice of high lives; that the first duty of the ~~rich was to produce among their~~ poorer neighbours the physical condition which alone could render decent existence possible. Good air, more room, better clothes, better food and similar advantages would exorcise the demon which ran rife. "Stimulate private charity," said one school. "Relieve the rates. It is the State-paid pauper who is the source of all harm." "Down with charity," said another set; "the very word has become a degradation. Let the State see to it that the toiling millions are fed and housed as they should be." "Toiling millions!" would be replied. "The people who are in want never really toil at all. They are wastrels, lazy and ill-tempered. No one in England who will work need want." . . . These various views, and many others, were listened to by Charles Booth, and ever more earnestly did he seek an answer to the question. Who are the people of England? How do they really live? What do they really want? Do they want what is good, and if so, how is it to be given to them?<sup>1</sup>

It is the sense of helplessness that tries every one [explains Charles Booth in the paper read before the Royal Statistical Society on the Condition and Occupations of the people of the Tower Hamlets in May 1887]. The wage-earners are helpless to regulate or obtain the value of their work; the manufacturer or dealer can only work within the limits of competition; the rich are helpless to relieve want without stimulating its sources; the legislature is helpless because the limits of successful interference by change of law are closely circumscribed. From the helpless feelings spring socialistic theories, passionate suggestions of ignorance, setting at naught the nature of man and neglecting all the fundamental facts of human existence.

To relieve this sense of helplessness, the problems of human life must be better stated. The *à priori* reasoning of political economy, orthodox and unorthodox alike, fails from want of reality. At its base are a series of assumptions very imperfectly connected with the observed facts of life. We need to begin with a true picture of the modern industrial organism, the interchange of service, the exercise of faculty, the demands and satisfaction of desire. It is the possibility of such a picture as this that I wish to suggest, and it is as a contribution to it that I have written this paper.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Charles Booth—A Memoir* (Macmillan, 1918), by Mrs. Charles Booth, pp. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Condition and Occupations of the People of the Tower Hamlets, 1886-87*, by Charles Booth, 1887, p. 7.

## A GRAND INQUEST

### THE SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY

The East End of London, an area made up of the Tower Hamlets and the Hackney School Board divisions, and comprising one million inhabitants, was first surveyed. He chose this particular district of the Metropolis, one-quarter of the whole, because, to cite his own words, "it is supposed to contain the most destitute population in England, and to be, as it were, the focus of the problem of poverty in the midst of wealth, which is troubling the minds and hearts of so many people."<sup>1</sup> Of this vast aggregate in its completeness, he sought "to produce an instantaneous picture, fixing the facts on my negative as they appear at a given moment, and the imagination of my readers must add the movement, the constant changes, the whirl and turmoil of life" [Poverty, i, p. 26].<sup>2</sup> He made no attempt at history or even at describing contemporary development, but set himself to obtain, so to speak, an exact cross-section at a given moment, full from end to end of precise details, equally complete and equally microscopic over the whole

<sup>1</sup> *Condition and Occupation of the People of the Tower Hamlets, 1886-87*, by Charles Booth, 1887, p. 4; a paper read before the Royal Statistical Society, May 1887.

<sup>2</sup> This huge enquiry, begun in 1886, resulted in a series of volumes the publication of which extended over many years. The first volume, dealing with the East End of London, appeared in 1889; and those relating to Central and South London in 1891. These were included, in 1902-3, with the remaining results of the enquiry, in a new and definitive edition entitled *Life and Labour of the People in London*, in which the subject-matter was rearranged, revised by the 1891 census, and extended to seventeen volumes. These volumes comprised four on "Poverty" (which I shall cite as Poverty i. to iv.); five on "Industry" (Industry i. to v.); seven on "Religious Influences" (with which I do not deal except incidentally to the poverty and industry enquiry); and a "Final Volume" entitled "Notes on Social Influences and Conclusion" (to be cited as Final); together with a case of coloured maps, mounted and divided into convenient sections.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

field. Out of this multitudinous and infinitely diversified subject-matter he concentrated on two series of facts; first, the relative destitution, poverty or comfort of the home, and secondly, the character of the work from which the various bread-winners in the family derived their livelihood. Thus there were two separate and distinct enquiries carried on concurrently, each involving its own group of investigators and its own methods of investigation.

The general plan of the enquiry, as applying to the whole of London, is to divide the entire population by districts and by groups of trades, each answering to a similar division in the census; and then to deal with each district by a local enquiry, and with each group of trades by a trade enquiry. The principal object of the district enquiry would be to show the conditions under which the people live, but it would also give their employments; the principal object of the trade enquiry would be to show the conditions under which the people work, but it would indirectly deal with their manner of life. The double method would provide a check upon the results of each, and much light be thrown upon the one enquiry by the other.<sup>1</sup>

## METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

How did Charles Booth obtain the mass and range of data required to complete this scientific exploration into the life and labour of the people of London?

The statistical framework outlining the whole, and defining the parts of the gigantic undertaking, was afforded by the census figures of 1881, afterwards corrected and amplified by the more detailed census of 1891. With the scope and limitations of these statistical documents Charles Booth was already familiar; for prior to 1886 he had made a painstaking analysis of the figures giving the occupations of the people of the United Kingdom in the series of censuses from

<sup>1</sup> *Condition and Occupations of the People of the Tower Hamlets, 1886-87*, by Charles Booth, 1887, p. 2.

## A GRAND INQUEST

1841 to 1881.<sup>1</sup> This enquiry was undertaken in order to ascertain how many persons depended at any one time for their subsistence on any particular trade; and how the distribution of the population among different industries and services had shifted from decade to decade. Owing to the divergent classification of persons and industries adopted by successive Registrars-General, the scientific result of this analysis and re-classification was disappointing. But it had given its author facility in the handling of such figures and an influential introduction to the census authorities. Thus, at the very outset of his enquiry he was able to obtain, not only all the published documents giving the numerical totals and rough classifications of the latest census, that of 1881, but he was also given access, by special favour of the Registrar-General, to the information, correct and incorrect, recorded in the Householders' Schedules. The census of 1891 proved to be of even greater value owing to the addition, in the Householders' Schedules, of two new questions, vital to the completion of the enquiry.<sup>2</sup> Each

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 49, pp. 314-444, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> It was stated by an official of the Board of Trade at the meeting of the Statistical Society, December 1893, that Charles Booth was a member of the official committee appointed to draw up the Householders' Schedules and make other arrangements for the 1891 census. He himself tells us that "to meet the difficulty of novelty, and to make sure that the enumerators' work was carefully and intelligently performed, at any rate in London, I obtained the Registrar-General's permission to place myself in communication with the Registrars in each sub-district of the Metropolis, and through them with the enumerators themselves. I personally saw all the Registrars more than once, and discussed the subject with them, pointing out the object to be attained, and the important uses that could be made of the material to be collected; and my appeal was very heartily responded to, both by them and by the enumerators. Amongst so many men (there were over three thousand enumerators in

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

head of family or occupier living in fewer than five rooms was asked to state the number of rooms occupied; and, in London at least, this information was in most instances, obtained by the enumerators. Further, householders employing domestic servants were called upon to state the number they employed. Thus, Charles Booth was able to verify and revise, by the practically contemporary and complete enumeration of the Registrar-General, his classification of the entire population, from top to bottom, testing poverty by the degree of crowding in the dwelling, and affluence by the number of servants employed.

But it was clear to a scientific investigator that an enquiry dependent on the filling up of a form by each household had to restrict itself to the barest numerical data, and that such details as were given could not always be depended upon as accurate. Even so elementary a "qualitative" fact as occupation had proved to be stated so vaguely as to be almost useless—employers, manual-working wage-earners and salaried managers, together with the superannuated and those who had merely left the trade, being, for instance, all included under "builders." Hence individual enquiry and personal observation were indispensable. Many such investigations had been made, by all sorts of people and the most diverse agencies. But these had always been carried out over small fields, specially selected for one or other reason; and there were no means of deciding whether, and to what extent, they were representative of the whole people even of a single street. Charles Booth's

all) there could not be uniform excellence, and no doubt some may have performed the work in a perfunctory manner, but, on the whole, I was assured, and feel quite satisfied, that the work was well and conscientiously done." [Industry, i. p. 12

## A GRAND INQUEST

invention was the combination of the census with the personal enquiry into each family, for the double purpose of making his survey co-extensive with the entire field, without selection, and of uniting the qualitative with the quantitative information thus obtained. By this cross-verification of wholesale statistics by personal observation of individual cases, and the verification of the sum of individual cases obtained by personal observation by the statistics of the census, Charles Booth was not only able to produce a complete series of qualitative as well as quantitative descriptions of the households and their environment, but also to present this triumph of personal observation in a statistical framework covering the whole four millions of people.

Such a colossal investigation, dealing with nearly a million households, could obviously not be carried out, even in a decade, by one investigator or by any ordinary group of investigators. Some other instrument had to be found. This Charles Booth discovered in what I shall term the *Method of Wholesale Interviewing*. "The root idea with which I began the work," he tells us, "was that every fact I needed was known to some one, and that the information had simply to be collected and put together." [Final, p. 32.] In giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor, Joseph Chamberlain had incidentally mentioned that the Birmingham Town Council, in preparing its schemes for the clearance of slum areas, had found useful the very complete knowledge of each family possessed by the school attendance officers. Following this suggestion, Charles Booth obtained permission to arrange, with each of the sixty-six school attendance officers at work in the East End, to give a series of evenings, with his notebooks, as a witness, submitting to

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

patient examination by Charles Booth or one of his secretaries as to the facts of each household.

In the Tower Hamlets division, which was completed first, we gave on the average  $19\frac{3}{4}$  hours' work to each School Board visitor; in the Hackney division this was increased to  $23\frac{1}{2}$  hours. St. George's-in-the-East, when first done in 1886, cost 60 hours' work with the visitors; when revised it occupied 83 hours . . . the task was so tremendous, the prospect of its completion so remote; and every detail cost time. . . . [But] without this nothing could have been done. The merit of the information so obtained, looked at statistically, lies mainly in the breadth of view obtained. It is in effect the whole population that comes under review. Other agencies usually seek out some particular class or deal with some particular condition of people. The knowledge so obtained may be more exact, but it is circumscribed and very apt to produce a distortion of judgement. For this reason, the information to be had from the School Board visitors, with all its inequalities and imperfections, is excellent as a framework for a picture of the Life and Labour of the People. [Poverty, i. pp. 25-6.]

When Charles Booth extended the same methods of investigation to the whole of the county of London, thus including a total of four million inhabitants, he shortened his procedure of interviewing the school attendance officers.

In passing from the special study of East London to a review of the whole Metropolis the method of inquiry into the condition of the people was slightly changed. In dealing with East London (and afterwards with Central London and Battersea) the unit taken was the family. In extending over the larger area the street has been substituted as a working basis. Instead of noting the number of children going to school from each household with the employment and social position of its head, we have contented ourselves with stating the number of children street by street, dividing them as to class according to what is known of the parents, but giving only general particulars of the occupations. The result is, that the division of the population according to the conditions under which they live has been maintained, but that according to employment has been dropped. [Poverty, ii. p. 1.]

## A GRAND INQUEST

The information thus obtained, when fitted into the framework of the census figures and used to verify and amplify the inevitable inaccuracy of the Householders' Schedules, formed, as he told us, the solid groundwork of the enquiry.

They [school attendance officers] are in daily contact with the people and have a very considerable knowledge of the parents of the school children, especially of the poorest among them, and of the conditions under which they live. No one can go, as I have done, over the description of the inhabitants of street after street in this huge district (East London), taken house by house and family by family—full as it is of picturesque details noted down from the lips of the visitor to whose mind they have been recalled by the open pages of its own schedules—and doubt the genuine character of the information and its truth. Of the wealth of my material I have no doubt. I am indeed embarrassed by its mass, and by my resolution to make use of no fact to which I cannot give a quantitative value. The materials for sensational stories lie plentifully in every book of our notes; but, even if I had the skill to use my material in this way—that gift of the imagination which is called “realistic”—I should not wish to use it here. There is struggling poverty, there is destitution, there is hunger, drunkenness, brutality, and crime; no one doubts that it is so. My object has been to attempt to show the numerical relation which poverty, misery, and depravity bear to regular earnings and comparative comfort, and to describe the general conditions under which each class lives. [Poverty, i. pp. 5-6.]

And here is a characteristic warning, from one who was primarily a statistician, to the eager observer of individual persons and families.

To judge rightly we need to bear both in mind, never to forget the numbers when thinking of the percentages, nor the percentages when thinking of the numbers. This last is difficult to those whose daily experience or whose imagination brings vividly before them the trials and sorrows of individual lives. They refuse to set off and balance the happy hours of the same class, or even of the same people, against these miseries; much less can they consent to bring the lot of other classes into the account,



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

add up the opposing figures, and contentedly carry forward a credit balance. In the arithmetic of woe they can only add or multiply, they cannot subtract or divide. In intensity of feeling such as this, and not in statistics, lies the power to move the world. But by statistics must this power be guided if it would move the world aright. [Poverty, i. p. 179.]

On the few occasions when I attended these interviews it was enlightening to watch how Charles Booth, or one or other of his secretaries, would extract from the school attendance officer, bit by bit, the extensive and intimate information with regard to each family, the memory of these willing witnesses amplifying and illustrating the precisely recorded facts in their notebooks. What was of greater significance to "the industrious apprentice" than any of the facts revealed was the way in which this method of wholesale interviewing and automatic recording blocked the working of personal bias. Each of the two or three hundred school attendance officers had doubtless his own predilections; one would be an optimist, another a pessimist; some were "proletarian" in their sympathies, others were inclined to think an unemployed person was unemployable. But with so large a group of witnesses these different types of prejudice cancelled out. The same differences in temperament or experience may have been at work with the interviewers. But short of deliberate and malicious falsification it was impracticable for any one taking part in extracting and swiftly recording specific facts about every individual in every house in every street throughout the Metropolis, to produce a result which seriously, and a total which materially, falsified the aggregate of particulars. In a wholly beneficent sense, the enquirers during the actual process of investigation were not able to "see the wood for the trees"; and were therefore

## A GRAND INQUEST

incapable of prejudging, according to their several expectations, the size, the shape or the value of the wood as a whole. To change the metaphor, it was impracticable for the investigators so to minimise or maximise each separate item so as to produce a picture of the life and labour of the whole people according to the predilections of any or all of them. Hence it is not surprising that the completed results of the investigation frequently contradicted (as we are told by the chief organiser) the expectations of one or other investigator, and even of all of them.<sup>1</sup>

The information obtained through the census papers and the school attendance officers was extended and verified by innumerable other witnesses, such as the teachers<sup>2</sup> in the schools, the superintendents of artisans' dwellings and rent-collectors, sanitary inspectors and relieving officers, ministers of religion, district visitors, the C.O.S. and other philanthropic agencies. In the later stages of the

<sup>1</sup> "I undoubtedly expected that this investigation would expose exaggeration, and it did so; but the actual poverty disclosed was so great, both in mass and in degree, and so absolutely certain, that I have gradually become equally anxious not to overstate." [Poverty, i. p. 5.]

<sup>2</sup> "In describing the streets and various portions of London we have drawn upon many sources of information, but it must be borne in mind that the classification of the people rests in effect upon what the School Board attendance officers have told us of the homes and parents of the children in elementary schools. It has therefore seemed desirable to check the results thus obtained by looking at the same facts from the point of view of the teachers in the schools, who, though lacking some means of information open to the attendance officers as to the parents and homes, have a much more intimate knowledge of the children themselves. Moreover, from the regularity or irregularity of attendance, the condition in which the children come to school, the demands for remission of fees, and in many other ways, the teachers can, and usually do, acquire a very considerable knowledge of the parents, and a fair idea of the character of the home." [Poverty, iii. p. 195.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

enquiry the results obtained by this process of interviewing were supplemented and verified by the personal observation of the organiser of the enquiry and his staff of investigators.

At the outset we shut our eyes, fearing lest any prejudice of our own should colour the information we received. It was not till the books were finished that I or my secretaries ourselves visited the streets amongst which we had been living in imagination. But later we gained confidence, and made it a rule to see each street ourselves at the time we received the visitor's account of it. [Poverty, i. p. 25.]

Finally, Charles Booth completed his survey by the kind of personal experience of working-class life which I had enjoyed in 1883 among the Lancashire cotton operatives, and which I have described in the preceding chapter.

For three separate periods I have taken up quarters, each time for several weeks, where I was not known; and as a lodger have shared the lives of people who would figure in my schedules as belonging to Classes C, D and E. Being more or less boarded, as well as lodged, I became intimately acquainted with some of those I met, and the lives and habits of many others came naturally under observation. [Poverty, i. p. 158.]

## THE EIGHTFOLD CLASSIFICATION OF THE PEOPLE

As I have already explained, the main purpose of Charles Booth's enquiry was to obtain an accurate statement of the number and proportion of families living in a state of misery, poverty, decent comfort and luxury respectively. But these vague words, which no two persons will interpret alike, were plainly insufficient for any purpose. He therefore formed for himself, after careful consideration, an eightfold classification according to the actual facts of each case, leaving it to the reader to affix to each class what descriptive adjective he pleased. The table of the eight

## A GRAND INQUEST

classes under which all the four millions of people are marshalled, together with the explanatory note, I give below.

- A. The lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers and semi-criminals.
- B. Casual earnings—"very poor."
- C. Intermittent earnings
- D. Small regular earnings } together the "poor."
- E. Regular standard earnings—above the line of poverty.
- F. Higher-class labour.
- G. Lower middle class.
- H. Upper middle class.

The divisions indicated here by "poor" and "very poor" are necessarily arbitrary. By the word "poor" I mean to describe those who have a sufficiently regular though bare income, such as 18s. to 21s. per week for a moderate family, and by "very poor" those who from any cause fall much below this standard. The "poor" are those whose means may be sufficient, but are barely sufficient, for decent independent life; the "very poor" those whose means are insufficient for this according to the usual standard of life in this country. My "poor" may be described as living under a struggle to obtain the necessities of life and make both ends meet; while the "very poor" live in a state of chronic want. [Poverty, i. p. 33.]

And now we are in sight of the principal goal of Charles Booth's scientific exploration into the life and labour of the people of London. Sorting out the million families into his eight classes, he was able to give a definitive estimate of the economic and social condition of the whole of the inhabitants of the county of London. This descriptive analysis, was, it is needless to say, far more accurate and complete in respect of the 80 per cent of the community coming under the jurisdiction of the school attendance officers than it was of the 20 per cent consisting of the upper and lower middle classes, about whom no information was obtained except the number of domestic servants employed. But this restriction of the data was of slight significance, seeing

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

that the purpose of the investigation was to ascertain, in relation to the total, the number of persons living in a state of chronic destitution, the number of persons who might be accounted as poor—that is, living on the line of bare subsistence—and the number of persons belonging to the wage-earning class who were in a state of comparative comfort. The information obtained enabled him to construct a table showing the relative percentages of the whole contributed by these three classes of the population, together with another table classifying all this 80 per cent according to the degree of overcrowding. In the two compact tables given below the reader will find concentrated and condensed the quantitative results of Charles Booth's stupendous analysis of a million "Householders' Schedules," tested and amplified by the method of wholesale interviewing of the school attendance officers and also by the testimony of all sorts and conditions of men, and reinforced by his staff's personal observations.

### TABLE I

#### CLASSIFICATION BY FAMILY INCOME

In volume II of the Poverty Series the whole population (over-estimated at the time at 4,309,000) is divided and described as follows:

Classes A and B (the very poor)	354,444 or 8·4%
" C " D (the poor)	938,293 or 22·3%
" E " F (comfortable working class, including all servants)	2,166,503 or 51·5%
" G " H ("lower middle," "middle" and "upper classes")	749,930 or 17·8%
	<hr/>
Inmates of institutions	4,209,170 99,830
(Estimated population, 1889)	<hr/> 4,309,000 <hr/>

# A GRAND INQUEST

## TABLE II

CLASSIFICATION BY NUMBER OF ROOMS OCCUPIED

Poor.	(1 and 2) 3 or more persons per room	492,370 or	12.0%
	(3) 2 and under 3 persons per room	781,615 or 19.0%	19.5%
Central.	Common lodging houses, etc.	20,087 or 0.5%	
	(4) 1 and under 2 persons per room	962,780 or 23.4%	56.4%
	(5) Less than 1 person per room	153,471 or 3.7%	
	(6) Occupying more than 4 rooms	981,553 or 23.9%	
	Servants	205,858 or 5.0%	
Upper.	Persons living in large shops, etc.	15,321 or 0.4%	12.1%
	(a) 4 or more persons to 1 servant	227,832 or 5.5%	
	(b) to (h) 3 or less persons to 1 servant	248,493 or 6.0%	
	Inmates of hotels and boarding houses where servants are kept	25,726 or 0.6%	
		4,115,106	
Inmates of institutions		96,637	
		<u>4,211,743</u>	

[Final, p. 9. It may be explained that the "servants" in Table II are those employed by the "Upper" section (Classes G and H of Table I); and they are included in the "Central" section as being of much the same social grade as this 56.4 per cent. of the whole.]

### THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE POOR

These tables, however, whilst revealing the standard of life measured in income and house-room, afford no information with regard to the physical and social environment in which the different classes of the community had perforce to live.

In the modern industrial city it is the poverty of the poor that, in a quite literal sense, is their destruction. In the sunlit and wind-swept spaces of a sparsely inhabited

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

country, insufficient food and scanty clothing do not necessarily spell either disease or demoralisation. But huddled in the poor quarters of a great city, a million poverty-stricken men, women and children, working, sleeping, eating, mating and being born under the perpetual shadow of buildings belching out smoke, sweating vermin and excreting filth, make for themselves (though not, in the main, through their individual misdoing) a physical and social environment in which all but the strongest bodies and minds suffer continuous deterioration. These evil circumstances do not admit of quantitative measurement and statistical expression; even if we could weigh up and record the smoke, the vermin and the foul gases, it would tell us little or nothing about the physical misery and spiritual defilement of the victims. Realising the importance of social environment, Charles Booth added to his investigations into income and house-room a detailed survey of the physical and social environment, an early but elaborate essay in what I may call Social Topography, from which I take one or two samples.

In the inner ring nearly all available space is used for building, and almost every house is filled up with families. It is easy to trace the process. One can see what were the original buildings; in many cases they are still standing, and between them, on the large gardens of a past state of things, has been built the small cottage property of to-day. Houses of three rooms, houses of two rooms, houses of one room—houses set back against a wall or back to back, fronting it may be on a narrow footway, with posts at each end and a gutter down the middle. Small courts contrived to utilise some space in the rear, and approached by an archway under the building which fronts the street. Of such sort are the poorest class of houses. Besides the evidence of configuration, these little places are often called "gardens," telling their story with unintended irony. But in other cases all sentiment is dropped, and another tale about their origin finds expression in the name of "So-and-so's rents"—not houses,

## A GRAND INQUEST

nor dwellings, nor cottages, nor buildings, nor even a court or a yard, suggesting human needs, but just "rents." [Poverty, i. p. 30.]

The property is all very old, and it has been patched up and altered until it is difficult to distinguish one house from another. Small back yards have been utilised for building additional tenements. The property throughout is in a very bad condition, unsanitary and overcrowded; and it is stated (as a suggestive reason why so little has been done in the way of remedy) that until very recently the rent collector of the property was a brother of the sanitary inspector ! A number of rooms are occupied by prostitutes of the most pronounced order. [Poverty, i. pp. 10, 11.]

Here the streets are blocked with those coming to buy, or sell, pigeons, canaries, rabbits, fowls, parrots, or guinea-pigs, and with them or separately all the appurtenances of bird or pet keeping. Through this crowd the seller of shell-fish pushes his barrow; on the outskirts of it are movable shooting galleries and patent Aunt Sallies, while some man standing up in a dog-cart will dispose of racing tips in sealed envelopes to the East End sportsman. [Poverty, i. p. 67.]

Shelton Street was just wide enough for a vehicle to pass either way, with room between curb-stone and houses for one foot-passenger to walk; but vehicles would pass seldom, and foot-passengers would prefer the roadway to the risk of tearing their clothes against projecting nails. The houses, about forty in number, contained cellars, parlours, and first, second, and third floors, mostly two rooms on a floor, and few of the 200 families who lived there occupied more than one room. In little rooms no more than 8 ft. square would be found living father, mother and several children. Some of the rooms, from the peculiar build of the houses (shallow houses with double frontage) would be fairly large and have a recess 6 ft. wide for the bed, which in rare instances would be curtained off. If there was no curtain, any one lying on the bed would perhaps be covered up and hidden, head and all, when a visitor was admitted, or perhaps no shyness would be felt. . . . Drunkenness and dirt and bad language prevailed, and violence was common, reaching at times even to murder. Fifteen rooms out of twenty were filthy to the last degree, and the furniture in none of these would be worth 20s., in some cases not 5s. Not a room would be free from vermin, and in many life at night was unbearable. Several occupants



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

have said that in hot weather they don't go to bed, but sit in their clothes in the least infested part of the room. What good is it, they said, to go to bed when you can't get a wink of sleep for bugs and fleas? A visitor in these rooms was fortunate indeed if he carried nothing of the kind away with him. . . . The passage from the street to the back-door would be scarcely ever swept, to say nothing of being scrubbed. Most of the doors stood open all night as well as all day, and the passage and stairs gave shelter to many who were altogether homeless. Here the mother could stand with her baby, or sit with it on the stairs, or companions would huddle together in cold weather. The little yard at the back was only sufficient for dust-bin and closet and water-tap, serving for six or seven families. The water would be drawn from cisterns which were receptacles for refuse, and perhaps occasionally a dead cat. At one time the street was fever stricken; the mortality was high, and the authorities interfered with good effect so that the sanitary condition of the street just before it was destroyed was better than it had been formerly. The houses looked ready to fall, many of them being out of the perpendicular. Gambling was the amusement of the street. Sentries would be posted, and if the police made a rush the offenders would slip into the open houses and hide until danger was past. Sunday afternoon and evening was the heyday time for this street. Every doorstep would be crowded by those who sat or stood with pipe and jug of beer, while lads lounged about, and the gutters would find amusement for not a few children with bare feet, their faces and hands besmeared, while the mud oozed through between their toes. Add to this a group of fifteen or twenty young men gambling in the middle of the street and you complete the general picture. [Poverty, ii. pp. 46-8.]

But all the inhabitants of these mean streets were not addicted to gambling and drink; a fair number were respectable citizens; though experience of their own environment sometimes led to seditious views, if not with regard to the government of their country, at any rate with regard to the government of the universe.

So, too, on the second floor there were till lately a father and son, billposters, of good character. The man is a notorious Atheist, one who holds forth on behalf of his creed under railway arches, saying that if there be a God he must be a monster to

## A GRAND INQUEST

permit such misery as exists. This man suffers from heart disease, and the doctor tells him that some day in his excitement he will drop down dead. His room is full of Freethought publications. On the third floor, and in the other rooms below, there lived people of orderly habits, the landlord being particular about his tenants. [Poverty, ii. p. 65.]

## THE MAP OF POVERTY

And here I come to what was perhaps the most impressive achievement, and certainly the most picturesque outcome of the whole enquiry. The economic and social circumstances of all the families of London were graphically displayed in a series of maps, carefully coloured, street by street, according to the actual data obtained for each street. Charles Booth had ascertained with precision the class in which the residents in each street stood with regard to the number of rooms occupied by each family. For the 80 per cent who were wage-earners he had approximate figures of the level of family incomes and of the degree of overcrowding in the homes. For the remainder he had the number of domestic servants employed in proportion to the numbers in the families. The streets could, in fact, be put into the eightfold classification with as much accuracy as the individual families. Thus, it was possible, with the labour and time that Charles Booth never stinted, to display graphically on these wonderful maps, by an eightfold coloration, the extent, the local distribution and even the exact location of the misery, the poverty, the comfort and the luxury of the whole Metropolis.

There is a map of the whole Metropolitan area divided into compound blocks of about 30,000 inhabitants each, and shaded according to the percentage of poverty found in each. And there is a map on a larger scale (divided into four sections), on which is indicated the character of every street so far as it extends, but this map is squared off some way within the Metro-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

politan boundaries. The marking of the streets in different shades and colours according to their prevailing social character was done, in the first instance, from the particulars given in the notebooks, of which some specimen pages have been given. It was then revised by my secretaries, who for this purpose walked over the whole ground, and also by the School Board visitors. After this it was referred to the parish relieving officers for each Union, and to the agents of the Charity Organisation Society throughout London. The police were also referred to with regard to the streets marked black. Finally, I have consulted the clergy and their district visitors as to most of the poorer parts, obtaining from them, by the way, interesting details of typical streets. At each stage of revision amendments have been introduced where needed, and the map may now, I think, be accepted as practically correct. [Poverty, i. pp. 16, 17.]

### CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION

Meanwhile the second part of Charles Booth's plan of campaign was proceeding: that relating to the occupations of the people, "How they work" as distinguished from "How they live." There was first a trial trip, in which I co-operated, concerning the conditions of employment and industries peculiarly associated with the East End of London, such as labour in the London docks and wharves, and the various branches of what was then called the "sweating system" in the manufacture of slop clothing and the cheaper lines of boots, furniture and cigarettes, and in women's work generally. These monographs were completed and published in 1889 before the figures of the 1891 census were available; and in the definitive edition of 1902-3 they find their place, not in the "Industry" series but in vol. iv. of the "Poverty" series. In the elaborate and systematic investigation into the occupations of the whole people, embodied in the five volumes of the "Industry" series, I took no part; and I am no more competent to describe it than any other student of the pub-

## A GRAND INQUEST

lished results. But in order to complete this survey of Charles Booth's methods of investigation I will endeavour to give some indication of the lines on which he proceeded.

We find again the plan of combining the personal observation and testimony afforded by a large number of witnesses, with the statistical framework given by the census of the whole population. Unfortunately, the Registrar-General's classification of the occupations to which the million families had ascribed themselves ran to no fewer than three hundred and fifty "trades" or vocations of one sort or another, and these, moreover, were lessened in value by the fact that the terms used by those who filled up the "Householders' Schedules" were in many instances ambiguous. Charles Booth undertook the herculean task of re-classifying, on this point of occupation, the whole million schedules, according to a scheme of his own, arranging the aggregate into sixteen main "industries," subdivided into about ninety subclasses. . . . For each of the sixteen "industries" he was able to give an exact classification of those engaged in it from top to bottom, according to their social condition; and to show this graphically by tables exhibiting the number and percentage existing at eight separate grades, according to the number of persons per occupied room, and of the domestic servants kept by each family—these particular indexes of social conditions having been conclusively proved by the "Poverty" enquiry to correspond closely with grades of family income. These graphic diagrams of social condition "by industry" are in some cases illuminating, though opinions differ as to whether the particular grouping of occupations in an "industry" corresponds with any "organic" character of the group or with any particular problem to be solved. In some cases

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

(as for instance that of "the building industry"), in spite of the inclusion of the relatively tiny numbers of the great contractors and the architects with the manual working operatives, the diagram has obvious significance. At the other extreme of the Public Services and Professional Classes, which include in a single "industry" the Civil Service, the doctors, lawyers, teachers, artists and ministers of religion, with sweepers and dustmen and the waterworks employees, the diagram of the social condition of the whole aggregate of families can have but little value. Charles Booth's idea seems to have been to class those occupations together in an "industry" which co-operated in producing a particular commodity or a particular service, with a view to discovering what grade of social conditions was being afforded to those engaged in the production of each of them—a classification which, in the opinion of some competent critics, is not feasible on account of the interlocking of finance, commerce and manufacture; and if it were feasible would not be of scientific value, owing to the inclusion of persons of unrelated vocations and widely separated standards of expenditure in each of the so-called "industries."

More plainly significant were the results yielded by the classification into the eight separate grades of social condition of each of the ninety relatively homogeneous subclasses,<sup>1</sup> such as woodworkers, municipal employees, etc.;

<sup>1</sup> Even in this re-grouping of the census figures, many of the subclasses seem to me too heterogeneous to be of much value; for instance, the tables and diagrams relating to the persons occupied in medical pursuits include physicians and surgeons, nurses and midwives, chemists and druggists, mineral tooth-makers and bone-setters—vocations too widely divergent from each other in income, social status, degree of skill and character of training, to yield any common measure of social condition.

## A GRAND INQUEST

to which was added a graphic diagram, the product of immense industry, showing how the age distribution of those engaged in the occupation compared with the age distribution of the whole of the "occupied persons" of London. These tabular statements and graphic diagrams were supplemented by detailed statements as to whether the individuals concerned were born in or out of London; where and how the occupation was carried on; the rates of wages and methods of remuneration of the wage-earners; the amount of "slack time"; the hours of labour and sanitary conditions of the trade; the organisations existing in it; and innumerable other details gathered from employers, foremen, Trade Union officials and the personal observation of the investigators.

The method adopted has been varied according to the character of the employment, but everywhere we have tried to obtain information from all sides. Employers, trades union officials and individual workmen have all been applied to. . . . As regards employers in each trade, the plan adopted has been to approach as many as possible by circular, asking from each an exact account of those employed, whether men, women or boys, and the wages paid to each in an average, or, better still, in a maximum and minimum week. This appeal brought in every case a fair proportion of replies, and the tabulated results may be accepted as showing the earnings ordinarily made in the best class of firms. . . . For each section of industry I have endeavoured to ascertain the extent to which the workpeople are organised for trade purposes. Particulars of every trade union or society of importance have been obtained. It is, however, possible that some small society has, here and there, been omitted, owing either to the difficulty of tracing it, or to information being refused. The evidence of individual workers, I fear, falls short of what might be desired. It is not always easy to obtain; but when available adds much to the life of the picture. [Industry, i. pp. 27, 28.]

I have been very kindly allowed to use the wages returns from many London trades collected by the Statistical Department of the Board of Trade in 1886-7, but not published, because it

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

concerned trades which were not of sufficient general importance. I have set my figures and those of the Board of Trade side by side for comparison. . . . The queries of the Board of Trade asked for the maximum and minimum numbers employed in any weeks in 1885, with the total amount paid for the same weeks, and also the numbers employed in the first week of October 1886, with full particulars of character of employment, standard of hours worked, and wages for an ordinary full week's work. We could not venture to ask so much, and contented ourselves with the actual wages earned in an ordinary week (or in a busy and slack week, of which we ourselves took the average). Our figures are therefore actual, and include overtime or short time, whereas the figures of the Board of Trade are for a full week's work, taking no account of time lost or extra time made. [Industry, 1. p. 28.]

### CHARLES BOOTH AS A PIONEER IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

In the foregoing pages I have attempted to give in bare outline Charles Booth's plan of campaign. I have now to estimate, I fear even more imperfectly, the value of the product.

From the standpoint of science it seems to me that Charles Booth's principal contribution was not the discovery of particular facts, though, as I shall presently show, this revelation of the life and labour of the people in London reverberated in the world of politics and philanthropy, but his elaboration of an adequate technique in obtaining a vision of the condition of the whole population, within a given time. For it is only by this static account of a given population that we can discover the relative proportions of particular attributes—that we can make sure that the particular instances of good or evil that have been observed are not merely sensational exceptions. We may admit that the static method has well-defined limits to its power of discovery. When not repeated at intervals, according to strictly analogous schemes of classification, it seldom discovers what has happened in the past, or what is likely to

## A GRAND INQUEST

happen in the future.<sup>1</sup> And even when repeated, these statements of contemporaneous facts, however analogous to one another and photographic they may be, do not reveal the actual processes of birth, growth, decay and death of the social institutions existing at the time of each successive investigation. The experienced investigator knows that, in order to discover the processes underlying the structure and function, or the conditions of health and disease for any given piece of social organisation, the historical method<sup>2</sup> is imperative; with its use of the documents and contemporaneous literature belonging to each successive stage of the organisation concerned, with its own ways of interviewing, and its more continuous personal observation of particular organisations, to which may occasionally be added freedom to experiment in constitution-making and day-by-day administration. Only by watching *the processes* of growth and decay during a period of time, can we under-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Booth realised this limitation of the static method: "My principal aim is still confined to the description of things as they are. I have not undertaken to investigate how they came to be so, nor, except incidentally, to indicate whither they are tending; and only to a very limited extent, or very occasionally, has any comparison been made with the past. These points of view are deeply interesting and not to be ignored, but are beyond the scope of my own work. . . . In a similar way an attempt is made to show in what manner the action of Local Authorities and County Council, Poor Law Guardians and Local Government Board, affects the condition of the people, but there is no pretence of going deeply into the principles of government involved." [Religious Influences, i. p. 5.]

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "historical" rather than any of the alternative terms—evolutionary, genetic, kinetic and comparative method—because it seems to me least open to misunderstanding by the general reader. The "industrious apprentice" can be referred to the concise text-book, *Essentials of Scientific Method* (by A. Wolf, Professor of Logic and Scientific Method in the University of London, 1925).



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

stand even the contemporary facts at whatever may be their stage of development; and only by such a comprehension of the past and present processes can we get an insight into the means of change. But every method, like every instrument, has its limitations, and we do not abuse a knife because it turns out not to be a fork !

Further, Charles Booth showed us for the first time how best to combine the qualitative with the quantitative examination of social structure. By a masterly use of the method of wholesale interviewing (*i.e.* the use of a set of intermediaries who, in manageable number, were themselves acquainted with the whole aggregate of individuals to be investigated), amplified and verified by all sorts of independent testimony and personal observation of various parts of the immense field, he succeeded in making a qualitative examination of a magnitude never before attempted. By combining this with the merely mechanical enumeration of all the individuals in successive censuses, and by drawing out the eightfold indexes of social condition that he had discovered, he was able to give to his qualitative categories a numerical measurement of an accuracy and over a field far greater than had ever before been attempted. In short, Charles Booth was much more than a statistician. He was the boldest pioneer, in my judgement, and the achiever of the greatest results, in the methodology of the social sciences of the nineteenth century.

### THE POLITICAL EFFECT OF THE GRAND INQUEST

What was the effect on public opinion, what were the reactions in politics and philanthropy, of the revelation of the life and labour of the common people made by this "Grand Inquest?" I was so intimately associated as an "industrious apprentice" with the first stage of these

## A GRAND INQUEST

investigations, and my mind was, at the time, so sensitive to impressions, implications and inferences, that I may easily overstate the political and administrative results of Charles Booth's labours. All I can do is to give my own conclusions; and it is for the reader to discount them as he thinks fit.

The authoritative demonstration—a fact which could not be gainsaid after the publication of Charles Booth's tables—that as many as 30 per cent of the inhabitants of the richest as well as the largest city in the world lived actually at or beneath the level of bare subsistence—came as a shock to the governing class.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the assertions of the Marxian Socialists, that the manual workers as a whole were in a state of chronic destitution, and that the poor were steadily becoming poorer whilst the rich were becoming richer, were not borne out. Indeed, the high proportion of manual workers—as many as 50 per cent of the whole population—who were described as existing in relative comfort and security, was the consoling feature of Charles Booth's table. But the philanthropist and the politician were confronted with a million men, women and children in London alone, who were existing, at the best, on a family income of under 20s. a week, and, at worst, in a state of

<sup>1</sup> Subsequent enquiries into the condition of the people in other urban centres of population, on the Booth plan (varied by such statistical devices as "sampling" the population and extended by a more intensive study of family obligations), have borne out, with startling exactitude, the London statistics of poverty of 1881–1891, *i.e.* thirty per cent. on or under the line of bare subsistence. See *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* (York, 1902), by Seebohm Rowntree, and *Livelihood and Poverty* (Northampton and Warrington), 1915, by A. L. Bowley and A. R. Burnett Hurst. In view of the alarm arising out of the present condition of the people owing to persistent unemployment it would be of outstanding value if there could be started new enquiries on analogous lines in all these places, including the Metropolitan area.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

stand even the contemporary facts at whatever may be their stage of development; and only by such a comprehension of the past and present processes can we get an insight into the means of change. But every method, like every instrument, has its limitations, and we do not abuse a knife because it turns out not to be a fork !

Further, Charles Booth showed us for the first time how best to combine the qualitative with the quantitative examination of social structure. By a masterly use of the method of wholesale interviewing (*i.e.* the use of a set of intermediaries who, in manageable number, were themselves acquainted with the whole aggregate of individuals to be investigated), amplified and verified by all sorts of independent testimony and personal observation of various parts of the immense field, he succeeded in making a qualitative examination of a magnitude never before attempted. By combining this with the merely mechanical enumeration of all the individuals in successive censuses, and by drawing out the eightfold indexes of social condition that he had discovered, he was able to give to his qualitative categories a numerical measurement of an accuracy and over a field far greater than had ever before been attempted. In short, Charles Booth was much more than a statistician. He was the boldest pioneer, in my judgement, and the achiever of the greatest results, in the methodology of the social sciences of the nineteenth century.

### THE POLITICAL EFFECT OF THE GRAND INQUEST

What was the effect on public opinion, what were the reactions in politics and philanthropy, of the revelation of the life and labour of the common people made by this "Grand Inquest?" I was so intimately associated as an "industrious apprentice" with the first stage of these

## A GRAND INQUEST

investigations, and my mind was, at the time, so sensitive to impressions, implications and inferences, that I may easily overstate the political and administrative results of Charles Booth's labours. All I can do is to give my own conclusions; and it is for the reader to discount them as he thinks fit.

The authoritative demonstration—a fact which could not be gainsaid after the publication of Charles Booth's tables—that as many as 30 per cent of the inhabitants of the richest as well as the largest city in the world lived actually at or beneath the level of bare subsistence—came as a shock to the governing class.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the assertions of the Marxian Socialists, that the manual workers as a whole were in a state of chronic destitution, and that the poor were steadily becoming poorer whilst the rich were becoming richer, were not borne out. Indeed, the high proportion of manual workers—as many as 50 per cent of the whole population—who were described as existing in relative comfort and security, was the consoling feature of Charles Booth's table. But the philanthropist and the politician were confronted with a million men, women and children in London alone, who were existing, at the best, on a family income of under 20s. a week, and, at worst, in a state of

<sup>1</sup> Subsequent enquiries into the condition of the people in other urban centres of population, on the Booth plan (varied by such statistical devices as "sampling" the population and extended by a more intensive study of family obligations), have borne out, with startling exactitude, the London statistics of poverty of 1881–1891, i.e. thirty per cent. on or under the line of bare subsistence. See *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* (York, 1902), by Seebohm Rowntree, and *Livelihood and Poverty* (Northampton and Warrington), 1915, by A. L. Bowley and A. R. Burnett Hurst. In view of the alarm arising out of the present condition of the people owing to persistent unemployment it would be of outstanding value if there could be started new enquiries on analogous lines in all these places, including the Metropolitan area.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

chronic want; whilst this whole class of "poor" and "very poor" were subject to physical and social surroundings which were proved by innumerable test—from the death-rate at all ages, the prevalence of endemic disease, and the raging of epidemics to the number of vermin-infested and dinnerless children,<sup>1</sup> from prosecutions for drunkenness to convictions for "indecent occupation" of tenements—to be disastrously deteriorating to the race, alike in body and mind. How had this morass of destitution and chronic poverty arisen during a period of unprecedented national prosperity?

Now the static method of investigation may not be able to discover causes—that is, the processes by which things happen—but it frequently yields invaluable clues, for other investigators to follow up by one or other of the methods of research. What this practically simultaneous examination of four millions of English urban society revealed was a series of affiliations or concomitants with the various degrees of destitution and poverty; not merely overcrowding but also the analogous condition of the state of repair of the houses; the sanitation; the lighting, paving and cleansing of the streets, and, generally speaking, the degree of dirt, squalor, noise and disorderly conduct characteristic

<sup>1</sup> The condition of the child was perhaps the saddest feature in Charles Booth's picture: "Further than this, an official return, made in 1889, gives over 40,000 children in the London Board Schools, or nearly 10 per cent. of the number on the roll, as habitually attending in want of food, to which number returns from Voluntary schools add about 11,000 in the same condition. . . . Puny, pale-faced, scantily clad and badly shod, these small and feeble folk may be found sitting limp and chill on the school benches in all the poorer parts of London. They swell the bills of mortality as want and sickness thin them off, or survive to be the needy and enfeebled adults whose burden of helplessness the next generation will have to bear." [Poverty, iii. p. 207.]

## A GRAND INQUEST

of the various neighbourhoods: all these conditions rising and falling with the amount and the security of the livelihood of the family. An even more significant fact was the rise and fall of the death-rate and birth-rate according to the degree of destitution or poverty of the families concerned. That the death-rate, and especially the infantile death-rate, should be found to rise with a shortage of food, warmth and breathing space, and above all, in the presence of ubiquitous dirt and consequent flies, was of course expected; though the actual doubling of the infantile death-rate among the denizens of mean streets relatively to that of the inhabitants of West End squares was sensational. But to one who had been brought up in the political economy of Malthus, and taught to believe that every increment of income and security would inevitably be accompanied by additional children in working-class families, it was disconcerting to discover that the greater the poverty and overcrowding, and especially the greater the insecurity of the livelihood, the more reckless became the breeding of children; whilst every increment in income, and especially every rise in the regularity and the security of the income in working-class families, was found to be accompanied, according to the statistics, by a more successful control of the birth-rate. And among other circumstances or conditions found to be closely related to destitution and poverty were the character of the occupations followed by the bread-winners, the unsatisfactory methods of remuneration, the irregularity of the hours of labour, the low degree of responsibility of landlord and employer for the sanitation and the cubic space of the workplace. On these points I shall have more to say in the following chapter. On the other hand, popular illusions about certain malign forces at work in the poorer districts were dispelled by these

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

investigations. The careful enquiry made by H. Llewellyn Smith (afterwards Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, G.C.B., of the Board of Trade) disproved the common complaint that underpaid agricultural labourers swarmed into London and dragged down the rate of wages. It was proved beyond dispute that the country labour almost always came in at the top, and not at the bottom, of the wage levels. And the more sensational indictment of what was assumed to be a constant stream of aliens flooding the East End was finally disposed of by a precise enumeration of the aliens already living in the East End, and an accurate estimate of the relatively small annual increment afforded by the residuum between the total entering the Port of London and the numbers recorded as merely passing through London on their way to the United States of America.

## THE IRRELEVANCE OF CHARITY

In the rough and tumble of day-by-day public administration and private enterprise we cannot stand and wait for an authoritative social science: politicians, philanthropists and the plain citizen alike have, here and now, to act or refrain from acting according to any clues that may be available. Now I venture to suggest that perhaps the most noteworthy clue afforded by Charles Booth's investigation was the irrelevance of charitable assistance, whether regarded as a good or evil influence, in determining the social environment of the common people. Some forms of indiscriminate and unconditional almsgiving—for instance, when competing religious communities recklessly scattered gifts, in money and in kind, in order to bring into their several folds persons who were indifferent and even contemptuous of the religion that they were bribed to confess—proved to be as diabolically black as they had been

## A GRAND INQUEST

painted by the C.O.S.; but it was a mere fraction of the population that was thus debased. On the other hand, the administration of the Poor Law “according to the principles of 1834,” supplemented by charitable assistance according to the tenets of the C.O.S., though it reduced the Poor Rate and possibly diminished the amount spent in charity by enlightened persons, had next to no effect either on the poverty or on the misery of the poor. In the second volume of the “Religious Influences Series,” Charles Booth sums up his general impression of the effect of the rich man’s charity, even when tempered by a strictly administered Poor Law and the active intervention of the Charity Organisation Society. In the light of this conclusion—surely the most weighty judgement ever passed on a social experiment, all the more weighty because it is expressed with moderation and kindness—the whole controversy between rival schools of poor relief and private charity is seen to be obsolete in so far as the prevention of destitution is concerned.

It is very difficult to give any adequate idea of the extent of the religious and philanthropic effort that has been, and is, made in this district [Whitechapel, etc.]. No statistical device would be of much avail to measure the work done, and description fails to realise it. Great as the effort is in many other parts of London, it is greatest here. Nowhere else are the leading churches so completely organised to cover the whole field of their work; and nowhere else are the auxiliary missions on so huge a scale. Money has been supplied without stint; the total expended is enormous; and behind and beneath it all, much of the work is sustained by the self-devotion of very many and the exalted enthusiasm of not a few. It can hardly be but that the sense of present help and kindly sympathy brought home to the people must do good, and that the world would be a blacker world without it. But these results are difficult to gauge. Much that is done seems rather to do harm than good, and on the whole all this effort results in disappointment and causes men to turn to other methods.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Whitechapel, St. George's, and Stepney have been the scene of a very great experiment in the reform of the Poor Law on the anti-out-relief side. These three Unions, covering a very considerable area and including a population that is in the aggregate equal to that of a large provincial town, constitute in effect the district with which we are now dealing. The experiment has been an almost unique attempt. When it began the people were not only very poor, but terribly pauperised, and the object was to instil independence and so to raise the standard of life. A generation has elapsed, and we can take stock of the results. . . . The district, owing to the unusually small proportion of cases which from any point of view are suitable for out-relief, is well adapted for such an attempt, and, moreover, since it is part of their theory that private charity is much less injurious to the spirit of independence than parish aid, it has had the advantage (if it really be one) of being carried out contemporaneously with an unexampled flood of private benevolence. In this effort they have had the advantage also of close co-operation with the Charity Organisation Society, for whose methods no greater opportunity could ever be offered.

Complete success has been achieved in reducing outdoor relief without any corresponding increase in indoor pauperism. But to those who have advocated the principles which have produced these great results it is the more disheartening to find that they meet with no general acceptance. The example is not followed elsewhere, and even here the principle is not beyond the risk of abandonment. The continued presence and influence of the men I have named have been needed to prevent relapse, and at Stepney with the change of personnel there is already to some extent a change of policy.

Tested by the condition of the people, it is not possible to claim any great improvement. The people are no less poor, nor much, if at all, more independent. There are fewer paupers, but not any fewer who rely on charity in some form. Private charity defies control, and the work of the Charity Organisation Society has, in spite of itself, become largely that of providing, under careful management, one more source of assistance for those who would otherwise be obliged to apply to the Guardians. [Religious Influences, ii. pp. 50-53.]

### CHARLES BOOTH AS SOCIAL REFORMER

So much for the negative influence on opinion of Charles Booth's work. Was there no remedy for this condition of a

million people, over 30 per cent., of the richest city in the world? It is surely significant that this wealthy captain of industry, by this time Conservative in politics and strongly anti-Socialist in temper and economic views, should have come out of his prolonged study with proposals the very reverse of individualist. The force at work of which he is wholeheartedly admiring, and in which he finds most hope, is the essentially collectivist organisation of compulsory education by the London Education Authority at the public expense—an organisation that was, in these very years, being hotly denounced as a form of Socialism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Among the public buildings of the Metropolis the London Board Schools occupy a conspicuous place. In every quarter the eye is arrested by their distinctive architecture, as they stand, closest where the need is greatest, each one ‘like a tall sentinel at his post,’ keeping watch and ward over the interests of the generation that is to replace our own. The School Board buildings, as befits their purpose, are uniformly handsome, commodious, and for the most part substantial and well arranged. The health and convenience of both children and teachers have been carefully considered, and, in the later ones especially, have been increasingly secured. They accommodate a little over 443,000 children, and have been erected at a cost of about four and a half millions sterling. Taken as a whole, they may be said fairly to represent the high-water mark of the public conscience in this country in its relation to the education of the children of the people.” [Poverty, iii. p. 204.] “. . . Of these general influences the greatest of all is elementary education, which, however, presents here no special features, and embodies no special effort. . . . Habits of cleanliness and of order have been formed; a higher standard of dress and of decency has been attained, and this reacts upon the homes; and when children who have themselves been to school become parents, they accept and are ready to uphold the system, and support the authority of the teachers, instead of being prone to espouse with hand and tongue the cause of the refractory child. Schoolmasters need no longer fear the tongue of the mother or the horsewhip of an indignant father.” [Religious Influences, ii. pp. 53, 54.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

"The disease from which society suffers is the unrestricted competition in industry of the needy and the helpless." [Poverty, i. p. 162.] His particular remedy for the conditions that he had revealed was for "the State" compulsorily to take entire charge of the lives of the whole of "Class B"—"the entire removal of this very poor class out of the daily struggle for existence I believe to be the only solution of the problem" [Poverty, i. p. 154]. "... for the State to nurse the helpless and incompetent as we in our own families nurse the old, the young, and the sick, and provide for those who are not competent to provide for themselves" [Poverty, i. p. 165]. When we remember that, in London alone, Class B numbered over three hundred thousand people, apart from those actually in institutions; and that for the whole kingdom they would number over three million people, the magnitude and the daring of this piece of "Collectivism" were startling.

Nothing less than this [summed up Charles Booth] will enable self-respecting labour to obtain its full remuneration, and the nation its raised standard of life [Poverty, i. p. 165]. . . . My idea is to make the dual system, Socialism in the arms of Individualism, under which we already live, more efficient by extending somewhat the sphere of the former and making the division of function more distinct. Our Individualism fails because our Socialism is incomplete. In taking charge of the lives of the incapable, State Socialism finds its proper work, and by doing it completely, would relieve us of a serious danger. The Individualist system breaks down as things are, and is invaded on every side by Socialistic innovations, but its hardy doctrines would have a far better chance in a society purged of those who cannot stand alone. Thorough interference on the part of the State with the lives of a small fraction of the population would tend to make it possible, ultimately, to dispense with any Socialistic interference in the lives of all the rest. [Poverty, i. p. 167.]

This proposal, it is needless to say, found supporters neither among the individualists, who objected to State

## A GRAND INQUEST

intervention as such, nor among the Socialists, who preferred the "State tutelage" of the rack-renting landlord and rate-cutting employer to that of the very poor who were their victims. But a more popular and practicable proposal—one already advocated by Samuel Barnett and the Fabian Society—was given an immense prestige by Charles Booth's concurrent investigation into the conditions of the aged poor throughout England and Wales;<sup>1</sup> and by his advocacy of the grant by the State of non-contributory, universal old-age pensions, given as of right, irrespective of affluence, to every person attaining a given age. It was certainly due to his statistical investigations and incessant propaganda, more than to any other factor, that the Old Age Pensions Act was passed in 1908, to be greatly enlarged and extended in 1911, 1919 and 1924. And is it a mere coincidence that the two most distinguished members of his staff of investigators were, within a very few years of the publication of the completed edition in 1902-3, influentially associated with perhaps the two biggest experiments in public administration and public control in the interest of the manual workers that the century has yet seen? The brilliant young statistician, who was Charles Booth's chief intellectual adviser in the first stages of the great enquiry, found himself, as Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, G.C.B., in 1906-10 initiating and organising the national network of State Labour Exchanges, and in 1911-14 of the elaborate provisions for the able-bodied outside the Poor Law by compulsory unemployment insurance, involving, as amended in 1918-24, an annual issue which has run up, in the worst times, to over forty million pounds a year. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Aged Poor in England and Wales*, 1894, by Charles Booth; also *Charles Booth—A Memoir* (Macmillan, 1918), by Mrs. Charles Booth, pp. 141-154.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

other, who, Mrs. Charles Booth tells us, was "in many respects the ablest of all"<sup>1</sup>—the late Ernest Aves—played a leading part in the initiation and administration of the Boards established under the Trade Boards Act of 1909 (extended in 1913–18), by which, in a wide series of so-called sweated trades, employers were compelled by law to pay to all their employees not less than a prescribed legal minimum wage. Thus we have as the outcome of Charles Booth's poverty statistics, not indeed State provision for Class B as such, but State provision for the children of school age, State provision for those over seventy (and State provision for the blind over fifty), State provision (under health insurance) for the sick and disabled, and State provision for all those without employment (under unemployment insurance). Meanwhile, in the sphere of collective regulation, we have seen the repeated extensions of the Factory and Workshops, Mines and Merchant Shipping, Railways and Shop Hours Acts; and the far-reaching ramifications of minimum wage and maximum hours legislation. Indeed—perhaps being "wise after the event"—if I had to sum up, in a sentence, the net effects of Charles Booth's work, I should say that it was to give an entirely fresh impetus to the general adoption, by the British people, of what Fourier, three-quarters of a century before, had foreseen as the precursor of his organised communism, and had styled "guaranteeism"; or, as we now call it, the policy of securing to every individual, as the very basis of his life and work, a prescribed national minimum of the requisites for efficient parenthood and citizenship. This policy may, or may not, be Socialism, but it is assuredly a decisive denial of the economic individualism of the 'eighties.

<sup>1</sup> *Charles Booth—A Memoir* (Macmillan, 1918), by Mrs Charles Booth, p. 130.

## A GRAND INQUEST

It was under the continuous pressure of this peculiarly stimulating social environment—political, philanthropic and scientific—that I sought and found a field of enquiry, and began the series of observations and experiments described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI  
OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT  
[1884-1890; A.T. 26-32]

THE four years between my visit to Bacup in 1883 and the publication in 1887 of my first contribution to Charles Booth's *The Life and Labour of the People in London* were crucial years of my life; the period of greatest risk to health and happiness, a veritable testing-time of character and intelligence. From being a lively and, at times, good-looking society girl, assumed to be ready to follow her elder sisters' example in making a happy and otherwise satisfactory marriage, I was transformed into, I will not say a professional, but a professed brain-worker, overtly out for a career of my own. What had altered my looks, if not my outlook, was my frantic attempt, in the first two of these years, to combine three or four lives in one: housekeeping and entertaining for my father and sister in our London and country homes, with C.O.S. visiting in Soho, and a short spell of rent-collecting in a block of low-class dwellings at the East End of London; perpetual controversies with politicians and philanthropists with an assiduous study of blue books, social histories and economic treatises. "A rather hard and learned woman, with a clear and analytic mind," so records a brilliant journalist in his reminiscences of these days. Some of the opinions attributed to me by this friendly and too flattering critic I do not recognise; but his observation about my general attitude strikes me as singularly apt. "I'm afraid there is something a little hard about it all. Unhappily, man has bowels of compassion, and the

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

individual case appeals so much more to compassion than an undefined and unimaginable 'class.' ”<sup>1</sup>

To me “a million sick” have always seemed actually more worthy of self-sacrificing devotion than the “child sick in a fever,” preferred by Mrs. Browning’s *Aurora Leigh*. And why not? The medical officer of health, who, made aware by statistical investigation of the presence of malaria in his district, spends toilsome days and troubled nights in devising schemes for draining stagnant pools and providing for the wholesale distribution of quinine, has a compassion for human misery as deep-rooted as, and certainly more effective than that of the devoted nurse who soothes the fever-stricken patient in the last hours of life. This type of broad-based beneficence has been exquisitely expressed in two poems by Sir Ronald Ross, the discoverer of the cause of malaria:

[Before his discovery, 1890-93.]

The painful faces ask, can we not cure?  
We answer, No, not yet; we seek the laws.  
O God, reveal thro’ all this thing obscure  
The unseen, small, but million-murdering cause.

[After his discovery, 1897.]

This day relenting God  
Has placed within my hand  
A wondrous thing; and God  
Be praised. At His command,  
Seeking His secret deeds  
With tears and toiling breath,  
I find thy cunning seeds,  
O million-murdering Death.

I know this little thing  
A myriad men will save.  
O Death, where is thy sting?  
Thy victory, O Grave? ”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Changes and Chances*, by H. W. Nevinson, pp. 86-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophies*, by Sir Ronald Ross, pp. 21 and 53.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Not that I wish to imply that research, still less my own investigation, into the cause and cure of poverty has yielded, as yet, results in any way commensurate with Sir Ronald Ross's researches into the origin and prevention of malaria. Still in its infancy, the science of society has barely reached the years of fruitful discovery. All I suggest is that the impulse of pity for the needless misery of men, as distinguished from the suffering of those individuals whom you happen to know, can be as operative in the study of human nature in society as it is in that of the pestilential poisons besetting the human body.

### MANAGEMENT OF WORKING-CLASS DWELLINGS

Casting about for some way of observing the life and labour of the people, I seized the opportunity of my sister Kate's marriage<sup>1</sup> to assist Miss Ella Pycroft<sup>2</sup> in taking over one of my sister's commitments in the management of working-class dwellings in the East End of London. About

<sup>1</sup> About my sister's work and marriage Canon Barnett writes : " This year we lose Miss Potter. She has been a rent-collector since 1878, and has found here so many friends that, desiring on her wedding day to be among her ' own people,' she could only be among her friends at St. Jude's. March 15, 1883, will be long remembered by the many who, on that day, followed their friend with kindly thoughts into her new life, and shared the first meal which she took with her husband. We shall not forget her, and she, I know, will not forget us " (*Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. i. pp. 106-7).

<sup>2</sup> Miss Ella Pycroft, who became a lifelong friend, retained the management of Katherine Buildings, together with another block of dwellings under the East End Dwellings Co., until May 1890. At that time turning to educational work, after a year at the Cambridge Training College for Teachers, and after adding to the qualifications she had already held, she became, in 1893, Chief Organiser of Domestic Economy Subjects under the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, from which post she retired in 1904.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

the harmlessness of this intrusion of the relatively well-to-do into the homes of the very poor I had no misgiving; rents had to be collected, and it seemed to me, on balance, advantageous to the tenants of low-class property to have to pay their money to persons of intelligence and goodwill who were able to bring hardships and grievances to the notice of those who had power to mitigate or remedy them. And this occupation was certainly well fitted to form part of my apprenticeship as a social investigator. Unlike philanthropic visiting under the parochial clergy, or detective visiting under a C.O.S. committee, one was not watching instances of failure in the way of adaptation to this world or the next. What was under observation was the whole of a given section of the population: a group of families spontaneously associated in accordance with the social and economic circumstances of the particular district. From the outset the tenants regarded us, not as visitors of superior social status, still less as investigators, but as part of the normal machinery of their lives, like the school attendance officer or the pawnbroker; indeed, there was familiarity in their attitude, for they would refer to one or other of us as "my woman collector," a friendly neighbour being given the superior social status of "the lady next door." And as the management of this block of buildings was handed over to us from the day of its opening in January 1885, my colleague and I had to learn, by actual experiment, how to choose, from a crowd of applicants, the tenants for 281 separate rooms; how to judge at sight relative sobriety and trustworthiness; how to test by the spoken and the written word the worth of references. Incidentally, it was an advantage that Katherine Buildings, situated close to St. Katherine's Docks, was itself an experiment. A group of philanthropists, inspired by Octavia Hill, had undertaken

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

the difficult task of rehousing without financial loss, in a manner both sanitary and cheap, the poorest of the poor: in particular, the dock labourers who had been ousted from their homes by the Metropolitan Board of Works in its demolition of insanitary slum property. The policy adopted by these experimenters in working-class housing was outlined by Octavia Hill in her evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement, 1882, and before the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1885.

"It seems to me that one great difficulty that has been before the people who have been interested in the Artisans' Dwellings Act is that they want to take too many steps at once: they want to move the very lowest class of poor out of, we will say, damp underground cellars, where a large number of them have been living in one room, at once into an ideal working-man's home. Now I grant that the problem is very difficult, but supposing they take the two steps separately, and be satisfied, for the moment, to build clean, light, dry rooms above ground; and instead of building them in suites, build them, as it is very easy to do, opening from a little lobby from which four rooms enter, instead of making any of them passage rooms; and they can either let one, two, three or four rooms, as the people require; and whenever the standard of working people is raised higher they can take more rooms." [*Question 3002, Select Committee on Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement, H.C. 235 of 1882.*]

"I think a very great deal more simplicity is needed in the construction of the houses. It seems to me that where you remove the very lowest class of dwelling, and wish to reaccommodate the same people, you must adopt the very simplest manner of building, and that I am afraid has not been done." [*Question 8833.*] "... They should build what really is wanted, and what is essential to health. . . . Primarily, I should not carry the water and the drains all over the place; I think that is ridiculous. If you have water on every floor, that is quite sufficient for working people. It is no hardship to have to carry a pail of water along a flat surface. You would not dream of altering the water supply in a tiny little house now, and yet people carry their water up three or four floors there. You would not

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

dream of legislating to prevent that. Surely, if you bring the water on each floor that is quite sufficient. In most of the blocks of workmen's dwellings the water is laid on into every tenement. That is not only a large cost to begin with, but it means an enormous cost in keeping the thing up, and a larger cost still in proportion as the tenants are destructive and careless. Of course, the same thing applies to the drains, and it is not in the least necessary that they should be laid on everywhere." [*Question* 8852, *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes*, C. 4402 of 1885.]

"You ought to be able to give people things that they do not break. I should make everything as strong as I could, and above all as simple as I could. These people are not at all accustomed to the use of appliances, and everything of that sort is a difficulty to them; and I am quite certain that we ought not to give them elaborate appliances for a long time yet." [*Question* 9003-4, *ibid.*]

So far as Katherine Buildings was concerned, the outcome of this policy was a long double-faced building in five tiers; on one side overlooking a street; on the other, looking on to a narrow yard hemmed in by a high blank brick wall forming the back of the premises of the Royal Mint. Right along the whole length of the building confronting the blank wall ran four open galleries, out of which led narrow passages, each passage to five rooms, identical in size and shape, except that the one at the end of the passage was much smaller than the others. All the rooms were "decorated" in the same dull, dead-red distemper, unpleasantly reminiscent of a butcher's shop. Within these uniform, cell-like apartments there were no labour-saving appliances, not even a sink and water-tap! Three narrow stone staircases led from the yard to the topmost gallery; on the landings between the galleries and the stairs were sinks and taps (three sinks and six taps to about sixty rooms); behind a tall wooden screen were placed sets of six closets on the trough system, sluiced every three hours; and these were allotted to the inhabitants of the rooms on either side of them; in the

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

yard below were the dustbins. From a sanitary standpoint there was perhaps little to be said against this super-economical structure. But the sanitary arrangements, taken as a whole, had the drawback that the set of six closets, used in common by a miscellaneous crowd of men, women and children, became the obtrusively dominant feature of the several staircases, up and down which trooped, morning, noon and night, the 600 or more inhabitants of the buildings. In short, all amenity, some would say all decency, was sacrificed to the two requirements of relatively low rents and physically sanitary buildings. "Benevolence has had much to do with the erection of dwellings in the neighbourhood," caustically observed Samuel Barnett, a few years after the opening of Katherine Buildings, "and in the name of benevolence, so as to encourage benevolence, some argue that decoration must be given up, so that such dwellings may be made to pay. Probably this is a mistake in economy: it is certainly a mistake in benevolence. To treat one's neighbour as one-self is not to decorate one's own house with the art of the world, and to leave one's neighbour's house with nothing but the drain-pipes to relieve the bareness of its walls."<sup>1</sup>

With this slight introduction I fall back on entries in the MS. diary—mere jottings of facts and impressions, the distracted and diversified life I was leading forbidding lengthy explanation or detailed description.

Another day at Whitechapel. Met Mr. Bond<sup>2</sup> there and looked

<sup>1</sup> *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. i. p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Bond (1844–1920). An Oxford "Double First" and Fellow of Queen's College, and endowed with sufficient private means to lead the life of unpaid public service, he became one of the leaders of the Charity Organisation movement, and

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

over fittings. Stove suggested by architect a failure; the management fails to go straight to the best authority and find out whether what is proposed is likely to succeed. Afterwards talked with Mr. Barnett. He is anxious that I should spend this unoccupied time in getting more general information, and find out particulars about medical officer, sanitary officer, relieving officer, School Board visitor, and voluntary sanitary committee, their powers and duties. [There follows an analysis of a manual of local government law, and a summary of Sanitary Acts and Metropolitan Local Management Act, etc., with details as to the Local Government officials in Whitechapel.] Miss Pycroft spent three days with me; daughter of a country physician. Free-thinking, had somewhat similar life to ours, isolated from other country neighbours by opinions. Decided business capacity, strong will and placid temper. Devoted to her father, with whom she has the same intimate companionable relationship as we have. Very anxious for work, and indifferent to life! We shall get on, and we are anxious to have no other workers on the block. [MS. diary, January 1885.]

I spend my time now in alternate days of work and rest. The physical part of my work absorbs so much energy that I have little left for thought and feeling. Work is the best narcotic, providing the patient be strong enough to take it. All is chaos at present. Long trudges through Whitechapel after applicants and references, and tenants tumbling in anyhow. A drift population of all classes and races; a constantly decomposing mass of human beings; few rising out of it, but many dropping down dead, pressed out of existence by the struggle. A certain weird romance with neither beginning nor end; visiting amongst these people in their dingy homes. They seem light-hearted enough,

among other things, one of the original directors of the East End Dwellings Co. He remained throughout his life an uncompromising individualist; served for a few years as a "Moderate" on the London County Council, and as the Conservative M.P. for East Nottingham from 1895 to 1906. A fine figure of a man with handsome features, large soulful grey eyes, attractively set in dark pencilled brows and long silken lashes, he alternated cultured comments with thrilling silences; and was the beloved of the philanthropic set. Indeed, it was said that George Eliot had him in mind in the characterisation of the most romantic of her heroes—Daniel Deronda—though, unlike Deronda, he never married.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

in spite of misery and disease. More often feel envy than pity. Shall in the future, when other workers are found, and when once I am fairly started in the practical work, undertake less of the management, and use the work more as an opportunity for observation. Mean some day to master, as far as my power goes, what is theoretically thought out in social questions. Earnestly hope I shall never get conceited again, or look upon my work as more than the means for remaining contented and free from pain. Relief to be alone. . . . Society constantly increasing; have none of that terrible nightmare feeling about it of last year. But work brings Society into its proper place as a rest and relaxation, instead of an effort and an excitement. Trust I shall never make social capital out of my work. That with me is a danger, as I enjoy retailing my experiences, independently of any effect I may produce, and the "vanity motive" comes in to strengthen desire. Perhaps the past year of suffering will decrease my egotism, and instead of cold observation and analysis, all done with the egotistical purpose of increasing knowledge, there will be the interest which comes from feeling, and from the desire humbly to serve those around me. [MS. diary, March 8, 1885.]

Feel rather depressed by the bigness of my work. When I look at those long balconies, and think of all the queer characters, tenants and would-be tenants, and realise that the character of the community will depend on our personal influence, and that, again, not only on character but on persistent health, I feel rather dizzy. Home life adds to strain. Have cleared away all instructive books, and taken to poetry and beautiful prose. Find restfulness in beauty now that I have hard practical work and constant friction. Emerson's essays delight me. [Review of Emerson follows.] [MS. diary, March 13, 1885.]

Here for two or three days' rest. My work takes a great deal out of me, and sometimes wonder how much of it I shall eventually do. Feel so utterly done when I come back from White-chapel, too tired to think or feel. [MS. diary, The Argoed, our Monmouthshire home, April 12, 1885.]

Working hard. Buildings are satisfactory; caretaker hopelessly inadequate. Tenants rough lot—the aborigines of the East End. Pressure to exclude these and take in only the respectable—follow Peabody's example. Interview with superintendent of Peabody's. "We had a rough lot to begin with; had to weed

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

them of the old inhabitants; ~~now only take in men with regular employment.~~"

The practical problem of management: are the tenants to be picked, and all doubtful or inconvenient persons excluded? Or are the former inhabitants to be housed so long as they are not manifestly disreputable? May have some rough work to do, and I am gaining experience. When overtired, the tenants haunt me with their wretched, disorderly lives. Wish I had started with more experience, and had been able to give my whole time to it. Half-hearted work is always bad. [MS. diary, June 4, 1885.]

Visited Miss Cons<sup>1</sup> at Surrey Buildings (South London Building Company, cost £20,887, pays four per cent.; no depreciation fund). According to evidence before Royal Commission, only three-quarters let. Working-class tenements, together with shops and cottages; outside staircase, balconies round pleasure ground; water-closets together, one to each tenement with keys. No sinks. Wash-houses and drying grounds on roof. Trained by Octavia Hill. Not a lady by birth, with the face and manner of a distinguished woman, almost a ruler of men. Absolute absorption in work; strong religious feeling, very little culture or interest in things outside the sphere of her own action. Cer-

Emma Cons (1838–1912), one of the most saintly as well as the most far-sighted of Victorian women philanthropists, deserves to be more widely known. Trained under Octavia Hill as a rent-collector, she revolted against the self-complacent harshness of doctrine of the C.O.S. of the 'eighties; and became an independent manager of working-class dwellings on the Surrey side. Realising that what was needed, even more than sanitary but dismal homes, was the organisation of the pleasures of the poor in great cities, she, in 1880, took over the management of the Victoria music hall, at that time a disreputable centre for all that was bad—Charles Kingsley's "licensed pit of darkness"—and ran it as a place of popular musical entertainment, free from vice, and unsubsidised by the sale of alcoholic drink. Supported by Samuel Morley, Miss Martineau and Lord Mount Temple, Miss Cons kept this enterprise going until her death in 1912, when she was succeeded by her niece, Miss Lilian Baylis, who had been assisting her; and whose genius has since transformed "the Vic," with its excellent operas, and its admirable productions of nearly all Shakespeare's plays, appreciated by a wide circle of enthusiastic wage-earning patrons, into something approaching the British National Theatre.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

tainly, she is not a lover of fact or theory: she was not clear as to the total number of rooms, unlets or arrears. No description of tenants kept. Did not attempt to theorise about her work. Kept all particulars as to families in her head. To her people she spoke with that peculiar combination of sympathy and authority which characterises the modern type of governing woman. I felt ashamed of the way I cross-questioned her. As far as I could make out from her books, her arrears amounted to within £1 of her weekly rent—that is to say, on her working-class tenants. She lives on the premises; collects other blocks, but devotes much time to other work in connection with amusement and instruction of the people. A calm enthusiasm in her face, giving her all to others. “Why withhold any of your time and strength?” seems to be her spirit. All her energy devoted to the practical side of the work. No desire to solve the general questions of the hour. These governing and guiding women may become important factors if they increase as they have done lately; women who give up their lives to the management of men; their whole energy, body and mind, absorbed in it. Unlike the learned woman, the emotional part of their nature is fully developed; their sympathy almost painfully active, expressed in eyes clear of self-consciousness, and bright with love and the pity from which it springs. They have the dignity of habitual authority; often they have the narrow-mindedness and social gaucherie due to complete absorption, physical and mental, in one set of feelings and ideas. The pure organiser belongs to a different type; she is represented by the active secretary of a growing society, or the matron of a big hospital; and she is to a certain extent unsexed by the justice, push and severity required. Not that I despise these qualities, they are indispensable to any work. But with the organiser, *justice is a technical and not a moral characteristic*. Push and severity are not prominent qualities in such guiding women as Miss Cons. For the guiding of men they use personal influence based on feeling more than on reasoning.

Desirable that I should thoroughly master details of South London Building Company management. [MS. diary, August 12, 1885.]

Took over the whole work from Miss Pycroft. Aim during her absence—collecting and accounting, thoroughly and methodically. Arrears diminished; rooms let; first-rate broker engaged; caretaker's work observed; amount of repairs done by him estimated. Morality enforced on buildings. Advant-

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

ages of clear account of my own tenants written, and general knowledge of Miss Pycroft's. Boys' club started; notes on reading room taken. To do this must live a great deal on the buildings, but not take rents on all days. Bullying people all the week round system a waste of time. [MS. diary, August 13, 1885.]

Delightful two days with Booths. . . . Discussed possibilities of social diagnosis. Charlie working away with [a] clerk, on the Mansion House enquiry into unemployment, and other work of statistical sort. Plenty of workers engaged in examination of facts collected by others; *personal investigation* required. *Pall Mall [Gazette]* has started this but in worst possible way; shallow and sensational. As to ideal of work; collecting well done; accounts not yet done; arrears diminished and a few rooms let. Many of the most respectable persons will not come in, owing to prejudice against buildings, and to ours in particular. The coarseness of the arrangements, want of attractiveness, and uniformity of the rooms a great disadvantage. Broker found; or rather, a broker, typical Jew, found me! Was I done? Paid 5s. for three warning visits. If he gets two disreputable women out without further charge, I have made a good bargain. Account of tenants got on with. If I get the facts during the next four weeks, can write up the stories of East End lives later on. [MS. diary, August 22, 1885.]

Struggling through the end of my work with painful effort: the old physical longing for the night that knows no morning. Given up books to Miss Pycroft. As to ideal of work, this much realised. Collecting and accounts on the whole well and thoroughly done; arrears diminished; twenty new tenants. On the other hand nine gone of their own accord, six left under notice—balance of five. A very indifferently written account of my own tenants. Boys' Club started by Maurice Paul.<sup>1</sup> Reading Room carried on by him. Spent three evenings there, and started the idea, in my own mind, of introducing a committee

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Eden Paul (younger son of Kegan Paul, the accomplished publisher of the 'eighties and 'nineties), at that time studying for the medical profession. To-day he is, in conjunction with his wife, a well-known translator of erudite foreign works, among many others the seven volumes of Treitschke's *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*. He has also been prominent as a member of the Left of the International Socialist Movement, and has contributed pamphlets and books on communism and invented the term "Proletcult" as the title of a book (Parsons) on "proletarian" culture.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

of men gradually into management of buildings. Roadnight's work [a porter] not estimated; not satisfied with him; wants more supervision than he gets. Suspect him of drinking; not sufficiently to be a scandal, but too much to keep respect of tenants. Failed in respect of Roadnight. Disagreeable row with one of Miss Pycroft's tenants, and had to use summary measures. Badly managed. Softness would have paid better than hardness. Difficult ideal of conduct to be realised. Firmness in enforcing obligation and respect for law, together with patient gentleness in the manner. Succeeded in case of Haggarty, and failed in case of Schmidts, because of this difference in my manner. Interesting conversation with Ansing family; man Prussian Catholic, settled in Whitechapel twenty-five years ago; woman English. Sweaters, that is, middlemen between [retail] shop and hands, for the making of men's clothes. Man with a rigid disapproval of Whitechapel population—not pity. Woman more heart (on her tongue); should think she was fairly kind, though naturally enough treating the hands for her own advantage, not for theirs. Gave melancholy account of their habits in regard to work. She told me, and one of her hands corroborated, that she frequently spent the whole day hunting them up in public-houses, to persuade them to finish work for which she had contracted. The account she and her husband gave of the class we have to do with is much the same as I should give with my small experience; except that they omit certain lovable qualities, which apparently a lady arouses into activity and appreciates. We all designate them as on the whole a *leisure* class; picking up their livelihood by casual work, poor in quality; by borrowing from their more industrious friends, and by petty theft. Drunken, thieving and loose in their morality. I should add, generous-hearted and affectionate, capable of self-control when once you have gained their affection. As a class, not beggars; do not expect you to give. Unlike the country poor in this matter. Also warm in their feeling for family and friends. As a class, in a purely business relationship in which no other moral principle enters than that of fulfilling contracts—hopelessly unsatisfactory. . . . To return to sweaters themselves. Seemed from their own account to work hard enough: their whole energy of body and mind going into their work. Apparently no recreation—always excepting their Sunday spent at Chapel. Live well. Woman mentioned incidentally that their butcher's bill for a party of eight came to eighteen shillings per week. Bad debts, that is, stolen work, came to a considerable item in their accounts. Intend to see more of them. [MS. diary, September 15, 1885.]

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

A pleasant holiday among the hills [our Westmorland home]. Read Taine's *Ancien Régime* with real enjoyment after ten days of artisans' dwellings Blue Books. These philosophic histories are delightful to ignoramuses. . . . [Then follows a review of Taine.] I do not know how little or how much my energy will be equal to. But while I hope to devote the greater part to my own subject, yet I feel my knowledge of history is wholly inadequate even for my special purpose. At the same time, a thorough detailed knowledge of what actually is, will give me a much stronger imagination, will furnish me with the raw material, the knowledge of men and women under different conditions, by the aid of which, added to a knowledge of past circumstances, the history of former men and women may be instructive. A rigmarole way of expressing myself! . . . As to scientific theories as to the evolution of society, a main principle upon which to graft knowledge of special fact, I have none except perhaps Comte's great generalisation of the processes of human thought. I read with a sort of fervid enthusiasm Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, and accepted his perfect formula of the course of life in all being. But his deductions from general theory, used as first principles of social science, are to my mind suggestive hypotheses, not proven laws. He irritates me by trying to palm off illustrations as data; by transcribing biological laws into the terms of social facts, and then reasoning from them as social laws. A deeper knowledge of his work, based on a wider experience of life, may make me in the end his true disciple. At present I am *not*. I am biased by his individualism, not converted to it. I should like to understand clearly what his theory is; and apart from mere deduction from *First Principles* and general analogies, which seem to me only to require skilful handling to cut into facts anyway, how he has worked it out. I should like also to have mastered the general outline of the reasoning of the scientific socialist. But I will keep my own mind from theorising about society. . . .

One needs more knowledge of antecedent facts. . . . For instance, a general knowledge of English history, with a due proportion of "setting" from other contemporary history; a special knowledge of the state of the working man in the different periods of our history, and of the laws regulating commerce and industry; the growth of industrial organisation and of its rival organisation; influence of religion in determining political and social action; rise and fall of various religious sects with the peculiar activities belonging to them; the difference of race in the working-class communities; the growth of towns and

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

the occupations necessitated by these, and the reaction of these occupations on the minds and bodies of the people; the formation and dissolution of classes, with their peculiar habits of body and mind. There is a study for a lifetime! That is to be my general aim. My special aim is to understand the condition of the working class in the way of housing, by digesting the evidence of other people; testing and supplementing it by my own observation and experiment. [MS. diary, October 1885.]

To-morrow to London to begin a new year of work. The report I sent to my Directors had an effect, and has made them reconsider their plan for the new building. When Mr. Bond's letter asking my attendance came I had forgotten all about my letter to him. Must look up details to support my case. [This letter was a detailed criticism of the sanitary arrangements at Katherine Buildings, more especially concerning the water-closets—their dominating position at the head of each flight of stairs; their common use; and their periodical sluicing; and a plea for self-contained tenements in the new block, on the ground that, the more brutalised the class of tenants, the more imperative it became to provide tolerably refined arrangements.]

Wish to get a complete account of the tenants of Katherine Buildings; must think out facts I want to ascertain about each family, and go straight at it. Will be obliged to go more deeply into practical work in order to get opportunities of observation. It is no use fighting against an irresistible tendency, however humble one may be as to the worth of it. And why should not I have the enjoyment now that I am young, of a thoroughly congenial pursuit? Through the management of men, one will always get the opportunity of studying them. Do not intend to become nauseated with my subject—intend to go through a course of reading in history and social science. Shall digest Herbert Spencer's *Sociology* and read Maine's *Popular Government*. Shall begin the study of the English People in periods—so as to learn their characteristics and compare them with their present ones, and understand the growth of local and political organisation, and the transfer of power from class to class; the material necessities and the ideas which lead to this transfer. [MS. diary, October 23, 1885.]

I meant this morning to have worked at my Katherine Buildings book, but unfortunately, or fortunately, my rent books were away. I think I will keep Sunday for rest and writing a short account of my work for the past week. . . . Met Directors, but

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

I think failed to convince them, as I had no alternative to offer which was based on experience. Two long conversations with Mr. Barnett: I making my suggestion of associating all agencies for housing in one body. Had not thought this out, and was rather astounded at the way he took it up and wanted me to elaborate a plan and become the moving spirit. Shall I always disappoint myself and others when my strength comes to be tested; or will my strength increase and enable me to carry out what I intend? . . . As for work, I have done only my bare duty at Katherine Buildings. I have begun a careful account of tenants. Oh, for more energy! Went with two fellow-workers to the Vic[toria Theatre]; managed by that grand woman, Miss Cons. To me a dreary performance, sinking to the level of the audience, while omitting the dash of coarseness, irreverence and low humour which give the spice and the reality to such entertainments. To my mind the devil is preferable, and in every way more wholesome, than a shapeless mediocrity.

Let me see what I mean by the association of the agencies for the housing of the poor. About 150,000 persons live under the superintendence of these agencies. I should like the experience of each class of agency to be tabulated, giving a complete account of their population, with occupation, family, income, where they came from, whether employed in the neighbourhood, and other details. Also method of superintendence (cause of ejection, etc.); relative expense of management and repairs, etc., I should like an annual meeting and a reading of reports, and for these reports to be made as complete as possible and published as proceedings. Also, that this association should serve as a central office to provide caretakers, superintendents and lady collectors. This is the outline of what I wish to discover about the inhabitants of Katherine Buildings: number of family, dead and alive; occupation of all members; actual income from work, charity or private property; race, whether born in London; if so, belonging to London stock? If not, reason for immigration, and from what part of the country; religion. As much of previous history as obtainable. [MS. diary, November 8, 1885.]

A long day, from 9.30 to 5 o'clock, with Alfred [Cripps] and Colonel Martindale at Albert and Victoria Docks, some way out of London on the Essex Marshes.. Labourers, a much finer class [than those of St. Katherine's Docks], English, practically permanently employed; live in small two-storey houses. [Then follows a description of the methods of employment.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

But I should like to master the whole thing. The courteous old gentleman seemed somewhat taken aback by my questions and demand for statistics. But I shall get them if I have patience. [Then follows a list of questions about methods of remuneration and the way of engaging labour, which I intend to get answered.] [MS. diary, November 12, 1885.]

Worked well: Monday, Katherine Buildings, one to nine o'clock; afterwards saw over Whittingham Club. Tuesday, Katherine Buildings, four hours; Wednesday, Albert and Victoria Docks from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.; Thursday, idle morning, afternoon, Katherine Buildings; Friday, seven hours' work on Katherine Buildings book; Saturday, Katherine Buildings twelve to seven o'clock. Altogether forty hours, including railway journey. [MS. diary, November 15, 1885.]

And here is an extract from a letter dated November 1885 to my father, who was staying in our Westmorland home, whilst I had returned to York House, Kensington:

In the afternoon I had four men who stayed from three to seven o'clock. First a young S——, a meek and mild pretty-looking young man, whom I had always put down as a dancing idiot, but, remembering Mrs. Barnett's admonition, I plunged into philanthropy and found out that he was a hard-working "co-operator;" and he gave us a most interesting account of the progress of the co-operative movement in London.

He has half promised to help me with the boys' club. It is extraordinary how much earnestness there is in the air, and how shy every one is of owing to it. Then entered the great Major W. who is now quartered at (I can't remember the name, I am so stupid to-day), who was most good-natured and tried valiantly to enter into our conversation.<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> This gallant officer had commanded the Black Watch when it was quartered at the barracks, Church Street, Kensington (the next building to York House; an attractive Queen Anne mansion standing in an extensive garden, which my father had recently bought, now (1926) demolished), and he had sent his "Bagpipes" in their kilts to march round and round our garden, whilst I was entertaining a party of East End school children. Insisting on being initiated into rent-collecting, he had scandalised my tenants by offering to pay up the arrears of the most impecunious!

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

Professor Newton<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Bond (who had come to talk business) completed our party, and we had a lengthy discussion on State education, etc. Mr. Bond stayed afterwards. He said he regretted he had shown my letter to the Board, as it had created a commotion, and delayed the final issue of the plans. They are not going to decide until Monday next, when they meet again. They have given way to us about some minor points on our own buildings.

Anyway, one will have done one's duty and given them a fair warning. I am working hard now at a book of all the tenants, past and present, with description of occupation, family, etc., and a statement of income and previous history and cause of leaving or ejection. I have undertaken to do the whole of it; and Miss Pycroft [is] to give me particulars about her tenants. She and I are cut out to work with each other, as she has the practical ability and power to carry things through with steady work, and I have more initiative and power of expression. What I lack is method and strength; both fail me in critical times. I have a much greater *show* of ability than reality, arising from my audacity of mind and plausible way of putting things. My dear old Father, I am a sort of weak edition of you! There is no doubt about it. I enjoy the planting, but don't care for the tending!

On Monday I went to bed directly I came from Whitechapel. . . . Yesterday I again went to Whitechapel, and dropped into the Barnetts' to lunch. Mr. Barnett is very full of the idea of a conference which would result in an association of the agencies for Housing of the Poor. About 160,000 persons live under the superintendence of these bodies; it seems a pity there should not be some intercommunication and exchange of valuable experience and a sifting of it for public purposes. But the whole thing wants thinking out. Miss Hill was dining there that night to discuss it. Mr. Barnett thought she would be adverse to it. But it seems that the lady collectors are deteriorating as a body, and that some stimulus is wanted to attract stronger and finer women into the profession; and Mr. Barnett evidently grasps at any plan likely to furnish this. I believe in the attraction of belonging to a *body* who have a definite mission and a definite expression, and

<sup>1</sup> Professor Newton, afterwards Sir Charles Newton (1816-94) Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at British Museum and holder of Yates Chair of Classical Archaeology at University College, London, was the most personally attractive, as Dr. Richard Garnett, the Keeper of the Books, was the most lovable member, of the B.M. officials with whom I was then intimate.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

where the stronger and more ambitious natures rise and lead. I admire and reverence women most who are content to be among the "unknown saints." But it is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that there is an increasing number of women to whom a matrimonial career is shut, and who seek a masculine reward for masculine qualities. There is in these women something exceedingly pathetic, and I would do anything to open careers to them in which their somewhat abnormal but useful qualities would get their own reward. They are a product of civilisation, and civilisation should use them for what they fit, and be thankful. At the best, their lives are sad and without joy or light-heartedness; they are now beginning to be deeply interested and warmed with enthusiasm. I think these strong women have a great future before them in the solution of social questions. They are not just inferior men; they may have masculine faculty, but they have the woman's temperament, and the stronger they are the more distinctively feminine they are in this.

I only hope that, instead of trying to ape men and take up men's pursuits, they will carve out their own careers, and not be satisfied until they have found the careers in which their particular form of power will achieve most. . . .

The next entry in the diary, early in December 1885, is a gloomy description of my father's sudden breakdown in health, the beginning of a long and lingering illness lasting for six years. But in order to complete the episode of rent-collecting I give a final entry, when, a year afterwards, as a relaxation from daily attendance on my father, I take over Miss Pycroft's work and her room in Wentworth Dwellings near to Katherine Buildings, during her month's holiday.

It would not do for me to live alone, I should become morbid. . . . But this East End life, with its dirt, drunkenness and immorality, absence of co-operation or common interests, saddens me and weighs down my spirit. I could not live down here; I should lose heart and become worthless as a worker. And practical work does not satisfy me; it seems like walking on shifting sand, with the forlorn hope that the impress of one's steps will be lasting, and guide others across the desert.

Where is the wish for better things in these myriads of beings hurrying along the streets night and day. Even their careless, sensual laugh, coarse jokes, and unloving words depress one as

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

one presses through the crowd, and almost shudders to touch them. It is not so much the actual vice, it is the low level of monotonous and yet excited life; the regular recurrence to street sensations, quarrels and fights; the greedy street-bargaining, and the petty theft and gambling. The better natures keep apart from their degraded fellow-citizens and fellow-workers, live lonely and perforce selfish lives, not desiring to lead their more ignorant and unself-controlled neighbours. Social intercourse brings out, and springs from, the worst qualities in East London; as a society it is an ever-increasing and ever-decomposing mass; the huge mass smothering the small centres containing within them the seeds of social life and growth. Even the faculty for manual labour becomes demoralised, and its capability is reduced.

These buildings, too, are to my mind an utter failure. In spite of Ella Pycroft's heroic efforts, they are not an influence for good. The free intercourse has here, as elsewhere in this dismal mass, a demoralising effect. The bad and indifferent, the drunken, mean and lowering elements overwhelm the effect of higher motive and noble example. The respectable tenants keep rigidly to themselves. To isolate yourself from your surroundings seems to be here the acme of social morality: in truth, it is the only creed one dare preach. "Do not meddle with your neighbours" is perforce the burden of one's advice to the newcomer. The meeting-places, there is something grotesquely coarse in this, are the water closets! Boys and girls crowd on these landings—they are the only lighted places in the buildings—to gamble and flirt. The lady collectors are an altogether superficial thing. Undoubtedly their gentleness and kindness bring light into many homes: but what are they in face of this collective brutality, heaped up together in infectious contact; adding to each other's dirt, physical and moral?

And how can one raise these beings to better things without the hope of a better world, the faith in the usefulness of effort? Why resist the drink demon? A short life and a merry one, why not? A woman diseased with drink came up to me screaming, in her hand the quart pot, her face directed to the Public [House]. What could I say? Why dissuade her? She is half-way to death—let her go—if death ends all. But with her go others; and these others may be only on the first step downwards. Alas! *there* is the pitifulness in this long chain of iniquity, children linked on to parents, friends to friends, and lovers to lovers, bearing down to that bottomless pit of decaying life.

The bright side of the East End life is the sociability and

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

generous sharing of small means. This, of course, brings in its train quarrels and backbiting; for it is easier to give than to bear ingratitude, or to be grateful. And as the "Public" is the only meeting-place, the more social and generous nature is led away even by its good qualities; while the crabbed mind and sickly constitution isolates itself, and possibly thrives in isolation. The drink demon destroys the fittest and spares the meaner nature: undermines the constitution of one family, and then passes on to stronger stuff. There are times when one loses all faith in *laissez-faire* and would suppress this poison at all hazards, for it eats the life of the nation. For hardworking men are tied to drunken wives, and hardworking women to drunken husbands; so that the good are weighted down, and their striving after a better life made meaningless.

And yet there are glimpses into happy homes; sights of love between men and women, and towards little children, and, rarely enough, devotion to the aged and the sick. And, possibly it is this occasional rest from dirt and disorder that makes the work more depressing; for one must hear unheeded the sickening cry of the sinking man or woman dragging the little ones down into poverty from which there is no rising.

In spite of the numberless out-of-work it is difficult to find really good workmen; for they become quickly demoralised and lose their workfulness. This again is depressing, for how can one help these people if they are not worthy of life from an economic point of view? [MS. diary, November 8, 1886.]

During the spell of rent-collecting I had only one interview with Octavia Hill, about which I find the following entry in my diary:

I met Miss Octavia Hill the other night at the Barnetts'. She is a small woman, with large head finely set on her shoulders. The form of her head and features, and the expression of the eyes and mouth, have the attractiveness of mental power. A peculiar charm in her smile. We talked on artisans' dwellings. I asked her whether she thought it necessary to keep accurate descriptions of the tenants. No, she did not see the use of it. "Surely it was wise to write down observations so as to be able to give true information," I suggested. She objected that there was already too much "windy talk": what you wanted was action; for men and women to go and work day by day among the less fortunate. And so there was a slight clash between us, and

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

I felt penitent for my presumption. But not convinced. [MS. diary, July 1886.]

### THE DEAD POINT

The sympathetic reader may have noted a black thread of personal unhappiness woven into the texture of my observations on East End life. From the entries in my diary I gather that I saw myself as one suffering from a divided personality; the normal woman seeking personal happiness in love given and taken within the framework of a successful marriage; whilst the other self claimed, in season and out of season, the right to the free activity of "a clear and analytic mind." But did the extent of my brain power—I was always asking myself—warrant sacrificing happiness, and even risking a peaceful acceptance of life, through the insurgent spirit of a defiant intellect? For in those days of customary subordination of the woman to the man—a condition accentuated in my case by special circumstances—it would not have been practicable to unite the life of love and the life of reason. The following entries in the diary—the first written on the eve of taking over the management of Katherine Buildings, and the others when my father's breakdown in health had led to my withdrawal from active work—reveal me in the grip of self-pity, "the commonest of all human failings," as Mr. Arthur Ponsonby observes in his fascinating introductions to *English Diaries*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *English Diaries from the XVIIth to the XXth Century*, by Arthur Ponsonby, 1924, p. 9. The following is Mr. Ponsonby's criticism of the value of introspective diaries: "Although the honesty and sincerity of the introspective writers may be beyond question, they do not necessarily by their method give a faithful picture of themselves. . . . We think we know ourselves better than others know us. But the truth is we only know the inside half, and it is doubtful whether any human being in varying moods can describe even that accurately. Moreover, the little shop window we dress and expose to view is by no means all that

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

I find that I had my own view of the use of introspective diaries. "Now that observation is my work I find it is necessary to keep two books, as I did when reading was my source of information. Otherwise the autobiography is eaten up by statistics of wages, hours of work, interviews with employers and workpeople—no space for the history of a woman's life. And without egotistical brooding, it is still necessary to keep a record of individual growth; not merely as a stepping-stone to higher life, but as a help in the future. How often have I found strength in turning over back pages, in watching the inevitable work its way in spite of my desperate clutches at happiness, which were seemingly fore-doomed to failure." [MS. diary, November 1, 1887.]

I don't suppose I shall ever again take that interest in myself to make me care to tell my thoughts and feelings to the impersonal confidant—my diary. At any rate there is a long lapse in my habit of writing down what I see, think and feel. And yet I am loath to say good-bye to an old friend, one who has been with me since I first had experiences, and wished to tell them to some one, tho' it were only to a phantom of myself. It would be curious to discover *who it is* to whom one writes in a diary? Possibly to some mysterious personification of one's own identity, to the Unknown, which lies below the constant change in matter and ideas, constituting the individual at any given moment. This unknown one was once my only friend; the being to whom I went for advice and consolation in all the small troubles of a child's life. Well do I remember, as a small thing, sitting under

others see of us. We may be very self-conscious about things which others hardly notice, and throughout our lives we may be entirely unaware of some glaring peculiarity which continually strikes our neighbours. A pelican is not the least self-conscious about the size of his beak. A peacock may be self-conscious about his tail; but he thinks, too, that he has a beautiful voice. On the other hand, outsiders may believe that some person is quite oblivious of certain failings till it is discovered by his diary that he had been struggling with them all along.

"We have said that the honesty and sincerity of indiscreet and unreticent writers are beyond question. This perhaps requires some qualification. Self-deception is very prevalent. There is a good deal of truth in Byron's remark in his diary, 'I fear one lies more to one's self than to any one else'; or as Gladstone puts it, 'I do not enter on interior matters. It is so easy to write, but to write honestly nearly impossible'" (pp. 10-11).

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

the damp bushes, and brooding over the want of love around one (possibly I could not discern it), and turning in upon myself, and saying, "Thou and I will live alone and if life be unbearable we will die." Poor little meagre-hearted thing! And then I said, "I will teach thee what I feel, think and see, and we will grow wise together; then shall we be happy." So I went my own little way, and noted diligently what I saw, and began on that to reason. Soon I found there were other minds seeing and reasoning, who would in their strength carry me on my way. I clutched at this help and they for pity's sake gave it me. But still I loved only the Unknown one, and my feeling was constantly looking inward, though my reason was straining its utmost to grasp what was outside. Then came friendship in the guise of intellectual sympathy; in later years, discovering its true nature in affection, gently putting reason, with its eternal analysis, on one side. And last of all came passion, with its burning heat; and emotion, which had for long smouldered unseen, burst into flame, and burnt down intellectual interests, personal ambition, and all other self-developing motives.

And now the Unknown one is a mere phantom, seldom conjured up, and then not grasped. Reason and emotion alike have turned towards the outer world. To-day, I say humbly, "we have learnt, poor thing, that we can neither see, think nor feel alone, much less live, without the help of others. Therefore we must live *for* others, and take what happiness comes to us by the way."

And all the time I was travelling in Bavaria this was the eternal refrain running in my mind. I saw things; wrote about them; I lived with an intimate friend. But day and night I cried secretly over my past, and regretted the form which my past life had given me. For who can undo the moulding work of years? We must live with the self we have made. [MS. diary, October 15, 1884.]

On November 26, the day that London polled in the general election of 1885, my father, who had gone out to vote, was struck down by paralysis; and complete withdrawal, not only from business but also from all social intercourse, became imperative. For me there ensued months of anxiety and gloom, deepened and darkened by my own personal unhappiness. My youngest sister, always in delicate health, had to be persuaded to winter abroad with

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

friends. My father's business engagements and commitments had to be straightened out. As for my own career, it looked as if it had come to a sudden and disastrous end. The new occupation of rent-collecting had to be given up; the comradeship with fellow-workers had to be severed; the attempts at social investigation had to be abandoned. Spending the winter months with my father at Bournemouth I was deprived of the narcotic of work, and, for the first few weeks, this abstinence was tormenting.

Life seems to my consciousness a horrible fact [I write in my diary, February 12, 1886]. Sometimes I wonder how long I shall support it. . . . I am never at peace with myself now; the whole of my past life looks like an irretrievable blunder. I have mistaken the facts of human life as far as my own existence is concerned. I am not strong enough to live without happiness. . . . I struggle through each new day waking with suicidal thoughts early in the morning; I try by determined effort to force my thoughts on to the old lines of continuous enquiry, and to beat back feeling into the narrow rut of duty. . . . I look out to-night on that hateful grey sea, the breaking and the vanishing of the surf on the shore; the waves break and vanish like my spasms of feeling; but they return again and again, and behind them is the bottomless ocean of despair. Eight-and-twenty, and living without hope! Now and again deceived by a movement of physical energy, and then falling back on the monotony of despair. No future but a vain repetition of the breaking waves of feeling. [MS. diary, February 12, 1886.]

But when intellectual curiosity is coupled with the habit of work there is always the chance of recovery, and the needful stimulus to renewed hope came quickly. Two days after that wail of egotistical misery there came a letter! Not a love letter, dear reader, but a prosaic communication from the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There had been a controversy in the newspapers about relief works in the neighbourhood of London for the East End unemployed. Concerned for the work and wages of the tenants of

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

Katherine Buildings, I wrote to protest against the attraction of still more labour to its most overstocked market by any widely advertised public employment, this letter being my first bid for publicity. "May we place your signature at the head of your article?" was the gracious reply by return of post. This slight recognition of my capacity as a writer on social questions undoubtedly helped me over the "dead point." But other influences were at work.

It is curious that old associations with this place [Bournemouth] and perhaps other causes, have brought me again under the influence of religion [I write in my diary a month later]. . . . Is it vanity, this intense desire to devote my life to clearing up social questions? The desire to do it is so strong with me that if I had faith in my own power I could accept an existence of daily toil, devoid of excitement, or what most persons would call pleasure, and wanting in the holier happiness of wife and mother. If I believed I had, in my intellect and character, a fit instrument for scientific enquiry, and that I should strike truth, I could pass years of uneventful learning, living to work, and sleeping to rest from work in order to work again. But I dread self-deception. The most pathetic of all lives are men and women cursed with a false estimate of their own ability, and waking up late in life to the waste blankness of unfulfilled instinct, missing even what is open to all men.

And then the isolation in the last days of existence. Surely one would always have friends whatever happened? And I love my friends, have never yet lost one. Even if I did not succeed in my main aim, my life need not be quite cast away! I could still be a practical help to those around me; an odd hand when help was needed. [MS. diary, March 15, 1886.]

It is strange that the spirit of religion [I write more than a year afterwards] always dwells in an unmarried life, devoted to work, rather than on the restful usefulness of wifehood and motherhood. Sometimes I wonder whether it is inflation; but the consciousness of a special mission to society at large, rather than to individuals, is certainly present in my better moments, ceasing only when I am a prey to passion, self-consciousness and egotism. In those dark days of worldliness and sensual feeling it died away; it rose again with the resigned fulfilment of my daily duties. Faith in my own capacity to do this work burns in communion



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

with my faith in the Great Spirit, before whom all things are equally small: it brightens or darkens with this higher faith. And yet, when I examine myself with sober judgement, I can see no reason for this faith in myself; any more than, when I examine the outside world, do I find a reason for my faith in God, and in all that God means. Neither can I see the connection between these two faiths—why one should be dependent on the other? . . .

And it is partly this consciousness of a special mission, and this faith in my own capacity, that bring a strained feeling into many of my relationships even to my nearest and dearest friends. To them, whenever I hint at it, the whole idea seems ludicrously out of proportion to what they know of my abilities. But for the most part I hide this faith away, and my best friends know not the spirit that moves me, slowly but inevitably, either to specialised usefulness or to life-failure. [MS. diary, July 1888.]

At this point in my narrative I am tempted to make a trite reflection because it is peculiarly applicable to this dead point in my career. How little we mortals know what is good for us? When I look back on that slough of despond into which I had been slowly sinking from 1884 onward, the deepest and darkest pit being my father's catastrophic illness in the winter of 1885-86, I seem to see a guardian angel busily at work hardening my own purpose and perhaps another person's heart! . . . ["Saved for me," interjects The Other One.] However that may be, so far as progress in my craft was concerned, this compulsory withdrawal from the distracted and diversified life I had been leading was, on the whole, a gain. Having sampled the method of observation and experiment, and discovered my field of enquiry, what I most needed was historical background; some knowledge of constitutional law and industrial development, and some acquaintance with past and present political and economic theory. With my small reserve of energy, the carrying out of the elaborate scheme of study mapped out in the autumn, concurrently with rent-collecting at Katherine Buildings, and housekeeping and entertaining

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

at York House, was beyond my powers. But what troubles the short-time brain-worker (had I not observed it in the tragic case of Herbert Spencer ?) is how to pass the time, after you have exhausted your small store of mental energy, without indulging in egotistical brooding over imaginary grievances. This problem was happily solved in the life I had to lead as companion to an invalid. Owing to my habit of early rising, I was able to get through a good three hours' sustained study and concentrated thought before breakfast; and this was about as much intellectual effort as I was equal to. For the rest of the morning there was plenty of occupation without strain: dealing with my father's correspondence; reading aloud the morning papers; walking by the side of his bath-chair, or driving out with him. After the mid-day meal there was the ride, or the walk across country, meditating on the morning's work, followed by another spell of reading aloud, sometimes the favourite novels of Miss Austen or Sir Walter Scott, or some newly published political biography. This peaceful existence was varied by frequent visits of married sisters, and by dashes up to London to meet a friend, or to look up a pamphlet or a blue book in the British Museum reading-room.

In one respect I was exceptionally fortunate. Throughout his long lingering illness my father retained his charm of character and temperament.

He has indeed the reward of a loving and self-devoted nature [I write in my diary three months after his first stroke of paralysis]. His life is without friction and without regret; his only sadness that deeply religious sorrow for mother's death. And even in that there is more tenderness than bitterness; for he loves to dwell on it, and lives over and over again in his imagination those years of married life of which nothing but the good is remembered. These two months have been especially happy; enjoying his physical healthiness, and not regretting his absence of strength, probably because he is unconscious of it. Living

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

in the lives of his children who have been constantly round him—perhaps thinking that these lives of nine women are more important to the world than they are—still, that is pardonable in an aged parent tottering to the grave. [MS. diary, April 4, 1885.]

### ESSAYS IN SOCIAL THEORY

During the following six months the current MS. books multiply rapidly, packed with abstracts and criticisms of historical works—I will spare the reader the catalogue.

There are two uses of historical study in its largest sense [I write in the first weeks of these studies], indispensable knowledge of fact as it enlightens social structure, and the equally indispensable cultivation of imagination to enable you to realise the multiform conditions and temperaments which make up human society. The difficulty lies in keeping off by-ways: mastering the leading facts thoroughly, and not attempting to study all the excrescences, often the most fascinating part of the whole. [MS. diary, April 17, 1886.]

Reading books and writing about them had, however, ceased to be the main instrument of self-education; I was beginning to have ideas of my own, and I was intent on expressing them. In particular, I was puzzling over the methodology of social science—What, for instance, was the right relation of personal observation to statistical enquiry? a problem which was, in these very months, being raised by the first phases of Charles Booth's enquiry into the life and labour of the people in London. The following entries describe my attempt to solve this problem.

Charles Booth's first meeting of his board of Statistical Research at City Office. Present: Charles Booth, Maurice Paul Benjamin Jones,<sup>1</sup> secretary of the Working Men's Co-operative

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Jones, for many years General Manager of the London Branch of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, became one of my most intimate associates in my enquiry into the Co-operative Movement; author of *Co-operative Production* [2 vols., 1894], and, jointly with [Right Honourable] Arthur Dyke Acland, of *Working Men Co-operators* [1884].

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

Society, London; Radley, secretary to a Trade Society, and myself. Object of this committee to get a fair picture of the whole of London society: that is of the four miles, by district and employment, the two methods to be based on census returns. We passed Charles Booth's elaborate and detailed plan for the work, and a short abstract of it for general purposes. At present Charles Booth is the sole worker in this gigantic undertaking. If I were more advanced in knowledge of previous conditions it is just the sort of work I should like to undertake, if I were free. . . . [MS. diary, April 17, 1886.]

Lunched with Mr. Barnett; he threw cold water on C. B.'s scheme; said it was impossible to get the information required, and was evidently sceptical of the value of such facts. [This remark, probably a reaction from my super-enthusiasm for fact-finding, cannot have represented Canon Barnett's eventual opinion of the value of Charles Booth's Grand Inquest, for he proved to be a most helpful associate in the enquiry.]

I suggested that "practical men," those who have actually to do with the management of society, will not listen to general principles, but will only believe in special application of these principles demonstrated by fact. He replied that, if he had read history right, it taught that ideas had more influence than facts, that ideas influence character, and that character was the secret of all life—all reforms should be judged by their effect on character. (I believe in ideas, but in ideas following facts. . . .) I agreed to this, adding that this truth or fact was one that required to be carefully demonstrated: that no amount of *à priori* reason would be of much value in persuading people; that the scientific spirit had produced scepticism as to general principles, and yet was not sufficiently far advanced to give faith in the scientific method. [MS. diary, April 18, 1886.]

Met at C. B.'s office Mr. Loch, secretary of C.O.S. Enthusiastic for accurate knowledge of the conditions of the poor. Evidently, from his account, there are many who would like to devote themselves to investigation. Borrowed from C. B. volumes of Statistical Society. . . . Statistics defined as the science which treats of the structure of human society, *i.e.* of society in all its constituents, however minute; and in all its relations, however complex; embracing alike the highest phenomena of education, commerce, crime, and the so-called "statistics" of pin-making and the London dustbin. . . . I am thinking that I might do well to explain what I mean by social

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

diagnosis, and publish it as an article in the autumn. If it were well written it would help Charles Booth's organisation. [MS. diary, May 4, 1886.]

I have quite made up my mind to try an article on social diagnosis. It would take the form of showing, first how much we were influenced in thought and action by descriptions of social facts; that social sentiment was formed by these descriptions, giving rise to a cry for political action or venting itself in voluntary effort; that political action, when taken, was based on these descriptions of social facts (see Commission on Artisans' Dwellings); therefore, the question is not whether we ought to be governed by the sentiment and thought arising from a complete or incomplete knowledge of social facts; whether it would not be wiser to guide our action by the decalogue, or the principles of Herbert Spencer. That is not the question of the practical politics of Herbert Spencer. That is not the question of the practical politics of the social science of the present day. General principles are discredited with the public at large, and with the type of man whom they elect to govern us.

Disagreement of the sociologists.

Very careful description of the rise of medical science—comparison between politicians and doctors in their debates. [MS. diary, May 6, 1886.]

Do not get on much with the accumulation of knowledge for my article. It is absolutely necessary that I should get a proof from history that we *do* act from the thought and sentiment formed by the descriptions of social facts. To a large extent, as Charles Booth remarked the other day, legislation is based on class feeling, or on religious or anti-religious feeling, and merely uses facts to prove its points, giving facts as data when they are really illustrations. There are four points I must make: two only have I in any way thought out.

(1) The method of statistical enquiry; illustrations of it in Giffen's *Progress of the Working Classes*. The data used. (2) Fallacy of the equal or identical nature of the units; and the illustrations of this fallacy from Giffen's article, and in the various estimates made of the income of the working class. Here I would insert description of demoralised labour in big towns. (3) Fallacy of the law that Labour, like water, goes to where it is best paid. Statement of the other attractions of town life. (4) Fallacy underlying the doctrine of averages as applying to wages.

Personal observation, and its liability to gross error unless

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

checked by the statistical method. Bias in the selection of facts. The superior attraction of certain facts to certain temperaments; instance women's work. Tendency of personal observation to take its own experience of a class as a sample of the whole. This tendency marked in philanthropists, and in politicians who draw their inspiration from philanthropists. Paternal government possibly based to some extent on this mistaken notion of the working class? . . . Great difficulty lying in the way of the observation of social organisation is the absence of certain qualities in the observers' minds present in the subject observed. For instance, religion, Bohemianism. Numerous enquirers check each other. [MS. diary, May 24, 1886]

The essay on Social Diagnosis, designed for immediate publication, failed to get written. During the summer months of 1886, which were spent with my father and sister at The Argoed, our Monmouthshire home, I turned aside to develop a train of thought arising out of the study of the writings of the political economists, from Adam Smith to Karl Marx, from Karl Marx to Alfred Marshall, a notion with regard to the relation of economics to sociology with a consequent theory of value. But among my manuscripts dated eighteen months later I find one entitled "Personal Observation and Statistical Enquiry," which I give in an appendix. The reader who is to-day what I was then, an industrious apprentice, may find it useful; not merely because it explains, with the zest of an amateur, an essential part of the technique of investigation, but also because it reveals my ignorance of other methods of research. There is, for instance, no sign that I had realised the need for the historical method, with its use of documents and contemporaneous literature, and its special task of discovering the sequence of events leading to changes in the constitution and activities of particular organisations.

The "little thing of my own," with which I became infatuated during the summer and autumn of 1886, took

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

form in two long essays, one on "The History of English Economics" and the other on "The Economic Theory of Karl Marx"—neither the one nor the other being ever presented for publication. I do not suggest that there is any intrinsic originality in these essays; it may well be that all the fallacies are to be found in the writings of other cranks, whilst the grain of truth is in the books of the recognised political economists. All I wish to imply is that the ideas embodied in these essays did in fact originate in my own mind.

The diary brings back to memory both the pains and the purpose of the discipline to which I was subjecting myself.

Oh! my head aches and my ambitious idea looms unreachably large and distant. Political economy is hateful—most hateful drudgery. Still, it is evident to me I must master it. What is more, I must master the grounds of it; for each fresh development [of theory] corresponds with some unconscious observation of the leading features of the contemporary industrial life. At present the form I want is not imaginable in this mass of deductions and illustrative facts. I need to understand what are in fact the data upon which political economy is based—what are its necessary assumptions. [MS. diary, July 2, 1886.]

I have broken the back of the economic science as far as I want it—there is perhaps another fortnight's study to fit me to write that one paragraph correctly. Principles of political economy have never been fixed—they have not only grown in number as fresh matter was brought under observation, but the principles themselves have developed with the greater care in the observation of each section of the subject-matter already subjected to generalisation. [MS. diary, July 18, 1886.]

Finished my essay on "The Rise and Growth of English Economics." I think I have expressed my central idea so that it can be understood, and gives a fairly correct sketch of the historical development. I wonder whether, if it is published, it will be thought very conceited? It isn't so. I can't help my ideas taking a positive form; and if I try to express them in a hesitating way I am only affected. It is either "I don't know,

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

for I am not capable of judging," or "I believe with my whole heart and soul that black is black, and nothing will persuade me to say it is white." It is this hopeless independence of thought that makes my mind so distasteful to many people; and rightly so, for a woman should be more or less dependent and receptive. However, I must go through the world with my mind as it is, and be true to myself. [MS. diary, September 14, 1886.]

The essay on "The Economic Theory of Karl Marx" was not finished until the following spring.

Three weeks absorbed in my review of Karl Marx, now nearly ended. It has cleared my own ideas; but whether it is written in a form that will be accepted and "take" I don't know. Sometimes I feel elated, and think that I have got the right end of the stick; at other times, when I am depressed by fatigue, I see in my writing only disjointed half-truths. Anyhow, intellectual production makes life for a time enjoyable; lends to it a personal meaning. And now that I must face many years of this loneliness, and absence of practical interests, constant intellectual endeavour is the only safeguard against morbid feeling. [MS. diary, February 25, 1887.]

Here again I will not burden my narrative by recalling generalisations which I ultimately left on one side, partly because I recognised that I had been carried out of my depth as a reasoner, and partly because I doubted the desirability of a water-tight science of political economy. But for the benefit of the reader who is also a student I give the gist of these unpublished essays in an appendix; my excuse being that this intolerable toil of thought was an essential part of the apprenticeship I am trying to describe. Indeed, I can conscientiously recommend the "industrious apprentice" to go and do likewise! For however futile may have been these imaginings as a contribution to sociology, they served me as illuminating hypotheses—suggesting what proved fruitful lines of investigation—in subsequent enquiries into East End labour and into the Co-operative Movement.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

My definition of the sphere of economics, involving, as it did, studies in social pathology, brought me upstanding against the dogmatic conclusions of my revered teacher, Herbert Spencer, whose objections to my speculations I give hereunder.

"So far as I understand them," he wrote in answer to an abstract of my argument which I had sent him, "the objections which you are making to the doctrines of the elder political economists, are a good deal of the kind that have of late years been made, and as I think, not rightly made. The explanation of my dissent I must put into a few sentences; using to explain my meaning the analogy which you rightly draw between social life and individual life.

"(1) Physiology formulates the laws of the bodily functions in a state of health, and absolutely ignores pathology—cannot take any account whatever of functions that are not normal. Meanwhile, a rational pathology can come into existence only by virtue of the previously established physiology which has ignored it: until there is an understanding of the functions in health, there is no understanding of them in disease.

"(2) Further, when rational pathology has been thus established, the course of treatment indicated by it is the course which aims as far as possible to re-establish the normal functions—*does not aim to readjust physiology in such way as to adapt it to pathological states.*

"(3) Just so it is with that account of the normal relations of industrial actions constituting political economy properly so-called. No account can be taken by it of disorder among these actions, or impediments to them. It cannot recognise pathological states at all; and further, the understanding of these pathological social states wholly depends upon previous establishment of that part of social physiology which constitutes political economy.

"(4) And moreover, if these pathological states are due to the traversing of free competition and free contract which political economy assumes, the course of treatment is not the readjustment of the principles of political economy, but the establishment as far as possible of free competition and free contract.

"If, as I understand you, you would so modify politico-economical principles as to take practical cognizance of pathological states, when you would simply organise pathological states, and things would go from bad to worse." [Extract from letter from Herbert Spencer, October 2, 1886.]

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

The old philosopher's letter is interesting [I write in my diary a few days later].

His first proposition is very characteristic. . . . Certainly, as a fact, physiology has grown out of the study of human and animal life in all its manifestations, birth, growth, disease and death. Physiological truths have actually been discovered by the study of pathology, and it is questionable whether the science of disease did not precede the science of health. But Herbert Spencer has no historical sense.

Second proposition [I had numbered the paragraphs in his letter] shows how thoroughly he misunderstands my position. I have no intention of prescribing a course of treatment; and his reference to it proves that his observation and reasoning on social subjects are subordinated to a *parti-pris* on the art of government. As Bella Fisher <sup>1</sup> misunderstands me in the same way, somehow or other I must have expressed myself wrongly.

<sup>1</sup> *Née* Arabella Buckley (sister to Lord Wrenbury), formerly secretary to Sir Charles Lyell and author of *A Short History of Natural Science* and other books, was in those days one of my best friends, encouraging me in my lonely studies and criticising any essay sent her.

The following entries in the diary show that I submitted the article on Karl Marx to other intellectual advisers—to my cousins the Booths and to my brother-in-law Alfred Cripps, with the following result.

The Booths are delighted with my article; Charlie enthusiastic. They sent it to Professor Beesly. Here is his answer. He overlooks the whole point of the article, which is to distinguish between the labour that is useful and the labour that is useless. That distinction rests on the presence of another element—desire. However, if my idea is true it is unlikely that it will be accepted all at once, especially by men who are pledged by past utterances to contrary opinions. But his criticism shows that I have not made my point clear, and his practical suggestion as to writing and proper references is useful. Evidently he does not think much of the article, or rather, he does not like it. [MS. diary, February 12, 1887.]

Alfred Cripps has read my article, and when I came to hear his opinion he greeted me with "Well, Beatrice, I have never read a stiffer article; I am not sure I understand it." We sat down to read it over word by word. . . . I see now that it must be re-written in a more concise and perfect form. [MS. diary, March 20 1887.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Third proposition assumes that political economy is an account of the *normal* relations within industry. The first step surely is to find out what are these relations; then possibly we may, through understanding the various economic diseases, discover what is normal, or shall we say, what is healthy?

But, as I understand Ricardo's economics, he does not attempt to discover, he merely assumes. It is possible that his assumptions may turn out to be an account of normal action, but he does not prove that his assumptions represent fact. But then he does not seem to think that proof is necessary.

Fourth proposition Again the question of treatment. "You would so modify politico-economical principles as to take practical cognizance of all pathological states." How strange! Evidently he regards economic science as a branch of the art of government, not as a branch of sociology; that is, the science of one part of human nature. The object of science is to discover what is; not to tell us according to some social ideal what ought to be. [MS. diary, October 4, 1886.]

A fortnight later there is another entry about my old friend, on a different note; an entry which incidentally reveals the unpleasant effect on mind and body of the "hateful drudgery of political economy."

To Brighton to see the old philosopher. A great mind run dry. But I love the poor old man, and my warm feeling gladdens his life. His existence one continual touching of his pulse to see how it fares with himself—a torturing self-analysis of all his physical feelings. Ah! me; there come times when one would recommend universal suicide. For the whole business of living seems too horribly tiresome to all concerned. And I feel seedy to-day—sick and headachy and discouraged; but my spirit will return. I need a change; and think the world is going to the Devil because *I* am ailing in body and mind. Courage, my friend, courage. [MS. diary, October 18, 1886.]

## STUDIES IN EAST END LIFE

Towards the end of the first year of my father's illness a partial return to active life became practicable. During the summer of 1886, with the help of our "beloved physician" Sir Andrew Clark, my father's friend as well as his medical

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

adviser, I persuaded my father to give my brother-in-law, Daniel Meinertzhagen,<sup>1</sup> a general power of attorney. To the unfailing kindness and courtesy of this near relative and able financier I owe my release from harassing business, for which I was ill-equipped, and which, owing to the speculative character of some of my father's investments, had caused me continuous anxiety. And when it became evident that my father's illness had passed out of the critical into the stationary phase, my married sisters insisted that they should take turn and turn about for at least four months of the year, so that, as they kindly put it, I might feel free to amuse myself in society, travel or work. The form that this recreation would take was promptly decided.

Two days in London with the Booths [I write at the end of the year]. Charlie is absorbed in his enquiry, working all his evenings with three paid secretaries, I have promised to undertake "Docks" in my March holiday. Dear sweet little Mary with her loving ways and charming motherhood. . . Leonard [Courtney] says little, and he has no special regard for what I say, but his personality—perfect integrity and courage—stands out like a rock. [MS. diary, December 5, 1886.]

After spending the winter with my father at Bournemouth I betook myself to the headquarters of the "Friends," the Devonshire House Hotel, Bishopsgate (which for several years became my London home), and started work.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Meinertzhagen, who married my sister Georgina in 1873, was the son of the senior partner, and himself eventually the senior partner, in the old-established firm of foreign bankers and merchants, Frederic Huth & Co, one of the leading "acceptance houses." See *A Bremen Family*, by Georgina Meinertzhagen, including interesting diaries of the Daniel Meinertzhagen of the period, when touring in Great Britain, France and Switzerland in 1756, 1798 and 1799. My sister wrote also an account of our grandfather, Richard Potter, entitled *From Ploughshare to Parliament*.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Thoroughly enjoyed the last month [I write towards the middle of my holiday]. Have got statistical outline of dock labour for Tower Hamlets.

Certainly, enquiring into social facts is interesting work \* but it needs the devotion of a life to do it thoroughly. I feel that the little bit of work I do will be very superficial, and that, until I can take to enquiry as a life-work, and not only as a holiday task, I shall do very little good with it. But I need much preparation. A general but thorough knowledge of English history and literature: a skeleton, the flesh and blood of which I could at any moment gain by specialised study. A theoretical grasp of the growth of industry, and of the present state of industrial organisation. Then the thinking out of principles—of the limit to the subject-matter and the question of methods. This, and a good deal more, I need before I am fully prepared for direct observation. A study of this kind is compatible with my home life, with its uniform duty of tender devotedness. Perhaps I shall be free before I am fit for freedom ! Even now my freedom is considerable ; more considerable than I have enjoyed since mother's death. Four months of the year I shall be able to devote to actual observations, and if I take my rest in the country, that will not leave much more than six months to be spent in literary preparation [of the material collected]. But as the observation will necessarily be disjointed and incomplete, it will serve more to clear my own ideas than form definite pictures of life. My education is yet to come.

In the meantime I am enjoying my life. I see more reason for believing that the sacrifices I have made to a special intellectual desire were warranted by a certain amount of faculty. As yet I have had no proof of this, my capacity has not been stamped as current coin ; the metal is still soft, and I know not whether it will bear the right impression. Still, I feel power, I feel capacity, even when I discover clearly my own limitations, for I think I discern the way to overcome them. Alfred Cripps' criticism of my article made me aware how very far off it was from good work ; but it was better than the last, and, unlike the last, I see how I can alter and make it good.

And the old faith in individual work is returning—in the sanctity of moral and intellectual conviction. [MS. diary, March 30, 1887.]

I feel rather low about the proposed paper on Dock Labour. Besides bare statistics I want local colouring ; a clear description of the various methods of employing men, of types of character

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

of men employed, and where they live. Must realise the "waiting at the gates," and find out for myself the exact hours at which the different classes are taken on. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

There follows pages and pages of notes of interviews with dock officials and the various grades of dock labourers and their wives. Morning after morning I am up early, watching the struggle for work at the dock gates; and observing the leisurely unloading of sailing vessels compared to the swift discharge of steamers.

This morning [I record early in May] I walked along Billingsgate to the London Docks. Crowded with loungers smoking villainous tobacco; coarse talk with the clash of the halfpenny on the pavement every now and again. Bestial content or hopeless discontent on their faces. The lowest form of leisure—the senseless curiosity about street rows, idle gazing at the street sellers, low jokes—this is "the chance" the docks offer! I met Dartford, respectable tenant K[atherine] B[uildings], and he greeted me cordially. He is always in work, and complains that he never gets a holiday—says that many of the unemployed do not want to work, and get sacked for not turning up. "I made a point of not mixing up with any one. Women get thuck together, and then there is always a row. The curse is the daily payment; it is always a mistake not to give the woman the money once a week instead of at odd times" Said [that] the worse a man is, the more work he will get at the docks. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

Go to the docks in the early morning [records another entry]. Permanent men respectable, sober, clean. Casuals low-looking, bestial, content with their own condition. Watch brutal fight and struggle: then sudden dissolution of the crowd with coarse jokes and loud laugh. Look of utter indifference on their faces: among them the one or two who have fallen from better things—their abject misery. The mass of the rejected lounge down to another dock or spread themselves over the entrance to the various wharves. About 100 of the lowest will congregate in the "cage" in Nightingale Lane waiting for the chance of a foreman needing them as odd men. If a man weary of ennui and of an empty stomach drops off to sleep, his companions will promptly search his pockets for the haphazard penny. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

In the evening went to club in St. George's Yard and talked to "preferables" at London and St. Katherine's docks. Robinson

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

socialist dock labourer; originally tobacconist. Emigrated, and returned to England because he became homesick. A rolling stone, superior and interesting-looking. Bitter and hopelessly illogical. The right to live and to marry and to have children, the basis of his argument. Gives deplorable account of lack of employment at Victoria Dock; an average of two or three days for each man. Contract system spreading fast; eight men under contract system will do the work of thirty employed direct by the Company. Says he himself, when he is working for the Company, tries to do as little as he can. Says that socialism makes little progress among dock labourers; they are incapable of organisation. Sees no remedy but a complete reconstruction of society. The State might supply "*pleasant labour*" for every one. Considers it a grievance that labourers are not allowed to take the tobacco that is being destroyed [by Custom House officials]; if it is found on their persons they are imprisoned for seven days. Says he makes a point of secreting tobacco on his person in order to defy the rule. Complains that the women of the working class are no companions to their husbands. "When I was courting my wife I could not get a word out of her; it was just walking by her side and giving her an occasional kiss. If a working man gets a good mother, and a woman that does not drink, as his wife, that is as much as he can expect. And my wife was not the first woman I courted. They are all alike in not talking of anything but details." Kennedy said much the same thing when he told Ella Pycroft that she did not know what it was to talk to a woman without brains. Robinson admitted that capitalists are in a poor way. He hates competition, machinery, employers and the Executives of Trade Unions. [MS. diary, May 13, 1887.]

Among those I interview are the School Board Visitors for the district; and here is an account of two interviews with Kerrigan, School Board Visitor for the Stepney Division.

Describes his casuals, about 900, as hereditary casuals, London born. The worst scoundrel is the cockney-born Irishman. The woman is the Chinaman of the place: drudges as the women of savage races: she slaves all day and night. Describes the communism of this class. They do not migrate out of the district, but they are constantly changing their lodgings: "they are like the circle of the suicides in Dante's *Inferno*; they go round and round within a certain area." They work for each other: hence

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

low ideal of work. They never see excellence in work. They never leave the neighbourhood. From the dock-gate they lounge back to the street: "treating" and being "treated," according as they have earned a few pence. Live chiefly on "tobacco" which is a compound of sugar, vinegar, brown paper and German nicotine. The teapot is constantly going—bread and a supply of dried haddock which goes through a domestic preparation: dried in the chimney and acquiring a delicate flavour by lying between the mattresses of the beds. They never read. Except the Catholics, they never go to church. On the Bank Holiday the whole family goes to Victoria Park. "Permanent" men live outside the neighbourhood—Forest Gate, Hackney, Upton, some even at Walthamstow. Kerrigan does not think that corruption and bribery go on in the West India Dock, as they do at the London and St. Katherine's. "Permanent" men might be classed just above the artisan and skilled mechanics. They read Herbert Spencer and Huxley, and are speculative in religious and political views. Victoria Park the meeting-place of intelligent working men. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

Most amusing day with Kerrigan, School Board Visitor living in Victoria Park [I record a few days later]. Victoria Park lies in the extreme east of London; it is surrounded by streets of small two-storey houses of the genteel type—a porch and one bow-window, Venetian blinds and lace curtains. These houses are inhabited by the lower middle class; now and again there is a row of more modest little dwellings, without the bow-window or the porch, or with a bow of less publicity and consideration—houses inhabited by the tip-top East End working class, mechanic or "permanent" labourers.

Sunday afternoons a great time in Victoria Park, not confined to local people, but the meeting-place of the enthusiasts and the odd-minded of the whole East End district. The first group we came to were congregating round a small organ; they were old men, women with children, and one or two stray youths; and they called themselves "The Elder Branch of Primitive Methodists" (?). Verily they looked "primitives"! Another group, larger and more combative, was made up of the Young Men's Christian Association; City clerks, spotty, seedy and smelly, but one or two among them inspired by living enthusiasm. They were singing loudly of the Blood of Jesus; of the eterna happiness, which is to wipe away the feeling of grievance among the failures of this life, and to compensate for an existence of dreary,



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

half-starved drudgery. Some ten yards farther, a small knot of working men crowded round two disputants, an English mechanic and a Russian emigrant. Foreign emigration was the question disputed; apparently both were agreed that the arrival of low-class labour ought to be stopped; but the Englishman insisted that it was the foreigners' fault for coming, while the Russian declared that it was the English Parliament who ought to prevent it by a heavy poll-tax on the invader.

"What is the good of your Government?" jeered the foreigner in a broken accent. "You call it representative, and say that you working men make it. But you tell them to do a thing, and instead of doing it they go on talking for twenty years, and then the time is past." "Yes," said the wit in the crowd, "the English Parliament is like the Christian who is always saying, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' and yet he never gets up and goes."

The main crowds were gathered on a gravel space under trees. Here was a nauseous nigger mouthing primitive methodism; a mongrel between the unctuous sacramentalist and the Christy Minstrel. Back to back with him, facing another crowd, there was a messenger from the "Hall of Science." He was explaining to an attentive audience of working men that man was an animal, and nothing but an animal. His face was lined by sensuality, and moved by shallow quickness and assertiveness of thought. He used scientific phrases, quoted freely from Huxley, Darwin and German physiologists, and assumed a certain impartiality in his treatment of rival religious theories of man's development. The burden of his message from the sphere of science was the animalism of man, the gross unreason of believing in any higher nature. But the thickest crowd surrounded the banner of the social democrat.<sup>1</sup> From a platform a hoarse-voiced man denounced the iniquities of the social system; in one

<sup>1</sup> My first introduction to the Social Democratic Federation, and the socialism based on "scientific materialism" which they preached, was an interview with the accomplished daughter of Karl Marx in the spring of 1883. And here is the entry in my diary:

Went in afternoon to British Museum and met Miss Marx in refreshment-room. Daughter of Karl Marx, socialist writer and refugee. Gains her livelihood by teaching literature, etc., and corresponding for socialist newspapers; now editing *Progress* in the enforced absence of Mr. Foote. Very wroth about imprisonment of latter [for blasphemy].

"I couldn't see much joke in those particular extracts but

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

hand he held Malthus, in the other, *Fruits of Philosophy*. The subject was a delicate one—the rival methods of checking population, late marriage versus preventive checks. He, however, joined issue with both methods, for he asserted that neither was needed. There was bread enough for all if it was equally distributed. Men starving while warehouses were stocked to overflowing; it was the commercial system that was at fault, not the

there was nothing wrong in them. Ridicule is quite a legitimate weapon. It is the weapon Voltaire used, and did more good with it than with any amount of serious argument. We think the Christian religion an immoral illusion, and we wish to use any argument to persuade the people that it is false. Ridicule appeals to the people we have to deal with, with much greater force than any amount of serious logical argument. The striking difference of this century and the last is, that free-thought was the privilege of the upper classes then, and it is becoming the privilege of the working classes now. We want to make them disregard the mythical next world and live for this world, and insist on having what will make it pleasant to them."

It was useless to argue with her—she refused to recognise the beauty of the Christian religion. She read the gospels of damnation. Thought that Christ, if he had existed, was a weak-headed individual, with a good deal of sweetness of character, but quite lacking in heroism. "Did he not in the last moment pray that the cup might pass from him?" When I asked her what the "socialist programme" was, she very sensibly remarked that I might as well ask her to give me in a short formula the whole theory of mechanics. Socialist programme was a deduction from social science, which was the most complicated of all sciences. I replied that from the very little I knew about political economy (the only social science we English understood) the social philosophers seemed to limit themselves to *describing forces*; they were more or less necessarians. She did not contradict this. I do not know whether it is true or not?

In person she is comely, dressed in a slovenly picturesque way, with curly black hair flying about in all directions. Fine eyes full of life and sympathy, otherwise ugly features and expression, and complexion showing the signs of an unhealthy excited life, kept up with stimulants and tempered by narcotics. Lives alone, is much connected with Bradlaugh set. . . . [MS. diary, May 24, 1883.] For an account of this remarkable woman and her tragic end, see *My Years of Exile*, by Edouard Bernstein, pp. 158-65.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

laws of nature. The crowd was not enthusiastic, only interested and eager to listen to new suggestions. For the most part they were men in full employment, and their speculative interest in social reform was not whetted by positive hunger. Now and again, when he denounced employers, there was a grunt of approval; when he pointed out the cul-de-sac of competition there was even slight applause. But when he turned from what is, to what would be if the socialist dogma reigned supreme, there was simply scepticism—readiness to listen but not willingness to perform. . . .

We wended our way back between these crowds to Mr. Kerrigan's lodging. The back room of a small working-class dwelling served as dining, sitting, sleeping, working room of this humble individual, with the most ingenious arrangements for all his functions. Kerrigan is an amusing Irishman; a seaman by profession, taken to School Board visiting as a livelihood. Intensely interested in his fellow-men, with extensive but uncultivated knowledge of science and literature. He is a lover of books. His language is picturesque and descriptive; he has a knack of ready generalisation, and his personal experience among the East End poor falls readily into definite pictures of different classes. In theory he is neither destructive nor constructive, and seems without prejudices. I should think too much entertained and interested to have many vices. There was something pathetic in his intense pleasure in our visit and our conversation. He gave us an excellent tea, and afterwards first-rate cigarettes. What would the conventional West End acquaintance say to two young women smoking and talking in the bed, sitting, smoking, working and bath room of an East End School Board Visitor? [MS. diary, Sunday, May 1887.]

Found it quite impossible to write in London; and wasted a week in attempting to do so. Interesting dinner with B. Jones and Mr. Hoffmann—Hoffmann is a Christian Socialist, and hopes that the spirit of true Christianity will make it impossible for a man to need the means of subsistence. Argues that all men have a right to live and to live well. Does not recognise the fact that many men do not fit their conditions and cannot be made to do so. He believes that socialism should be the result of public opinion; and that a socialist should preach at the corners of the streets the doctrines they believe in. Would not meet the question of increased numbers, assuming that every family was allowed to increase as it chose and provided with the means of so doing. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

As a contrast to my East End experiences, I give a stray note about a West End dinner-party.

Dined with Courtneys: John Morley, Arthur Balfour, Secretary for Ireland, E. Russell, Editor of *Liverpool Post* and rising politician, Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Dugdale. Arthur Balfour a charming person. Tall, good-looking and intellectual. Says cynical and clever things, which are meant to be cleverer than they turn out to be. Easy and well-bred—of the old type of gentleman-politician, a type fast fading out of existence. Is connected with the world of science through his gifted brother, who died sometime since. The party most harmonious; John Morley evidently in sympathy with Arthur Balfour, in spite of their public opposition. John Morley amused us by describing the Front Opposition Bench, and repeating Gladstone's remarks on the speeches made. The conversation was easy and pleasant, but it was all froth. No one said what he thought, and every one said what he thought to be clever. [MS. diary, May 1887.]

In after years I learnt to appreciate the subtle intellect and literary gifts of the author of the *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* and the *Foundations of Belief*. Other entries of the MS. diary, of which the following is a sample, reveal a bias against politicians in general, and the gentleman politician in particular; and my preference for the official peer, as compared with the hereditary legislator.

He [Lord Granville<sup>1</sup>] is an inconsiderable man, pleasant enough. But mental insignificance, joined to great political

<sup>1</sup> This was the second Earl Granville (1815–1891), who, after ten years in the House of Commons (1836–46), was for a whole generation the leading representative of the Whig and Liberal parties in the House of Lords, and an influential member of every Government from that side of the House. In 1857 he was made a Knight of the Garter. In 1859 the Queen offered him the Prime Ministership, but he was unable to form a Government. When I met him he had been alternately Secretary of State for the Colonies and for Foreign affairs in Gladstone's three Governments of 1868, 1880 and 1886. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society; and Chancellor of the University of London, 1856–91.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

position, is irritating to a democratic mind. Like most "society men" he does not care for the likes of me, and until last night he had not spoken to me. But I having appeared in a pretty black gown, he came up to me while I was discussing vehemently labour questions with Mr Cross, with whom I had struck up friendship. Lord Granville listened with a puzzled air; and when I tried, out of politeness, to bring him in, explaining to him the actual point we were thrashing out, he looked still more utterly at sea, as if I had asked him to join in a discussion on Chinese metaphysics. What could a woman, who really by night-light looked quite pretty, want with such questions; still less, how could she expect a polished man of the world to know what she was talking about? So the noble Earl stood silently gazing in mild surprise—I remember Chamberlain on Lord Granville "One does not expect to sit next an old nurse in Cabinet Council"—and turned away to tell a little story to some more congenial party. At breakfast he came and sat next me, and I started him off on Lady Ponsonby, and he seemed perfectly happy. After he had finished with her he meandered on about others of like position, till I was lost in the pursuit of dukes and duchesses, their personal characteristics and pedigrees, and could not give the requisite sympathetic appreciation. So he relapsed into silence.

With Lord Hobhouse<sup>1</sup> I had a great deal of conversation, and very sympathetic conversation it was. Liked him better than I have ever done before and I think he returned the compliment. There is a genuine ring about him; he lacks play of mind and is deficient in humour, but he is thoughtful and conscientious to an almost painful degree. Kindness and a chivalrous moral tone are his peculiar charm—a sort of fine essence of integrity in all things. He interests me as Henry's [my brother-in-law] uncle. . . [MS. diary, October 21, 1888.]

And here are two other entries about John Morley, one before and one after that given above.

Met John Morley yesterday at Kate's, and spent an evening with him and the Courtneys alone. A lovable man I should

<sup>1</sup> Hobhouse, Arthur, first Baron Hobhouse of Hadspen (1819–1904); chancery barrister, 1845; Q.C., 1862; member of Council of Governor-General of India, 1872–77; K.C.S.I., 1877; member of judicial committee of Privy Council (without salary), 1881–1901; raised to the peerage, 1885; see *Lord Hobhouse, a Memoir*, by L. T. Hobhouse and J. L. Hammond, 1905.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

think to his friends. Quick sympathy and appreciation of the ideas of others. But surely not a man of statesmanlike grasp or of practical sagacity? An "intellectual," delighting in "the order of thought," not in "the order of things." Spoke enthusiastically of Gladstone's power of work, of his charm, and of his absorption in the idea then present to his mind; he [Gladstone] obviously regarding men as shadows, liking those best who gave him the ease of flattery and perfect agreement. This, joined to what Huxley said at Bournemouth—that Gladstone never sought truth for itself but always regarded principles and opinions in so far as they were held and expressed by a more or less number of people—throws some light on the character of the G.O.M. [MS. diary, April 1886.]

I had a long talk with John Morley. He is anxious about the socialists at Newcastle. Up till now he has treated them with indifference, not to say contempt; but they mustered two thousand votes at the last School Board election, and Morley began to take them seriously. He was preparing for an interview at Newcastle, and was full of the eight hours' movement and other social questions. In his speeches he asserts that the social question is the one thing to live for; he ignores imperial politics and wants to cut off England from all foreign relations. And yet he has evidently never thought about social questions; he does not know even the A B C of labour problems. Oh! ye politicians! [MS. diary, February 11, 1889.]

It is strange, living in close correspondence with all sorts and conditions of men [I wrote as, back in the country, I pondered over the records of my London experiences], how one observes the same fact about classes as about individuals. Each class seems to have a certain range of ideas, and to be incapable of growing out of these ideas, unless it ceases to be a class. And so it is with individuals. Few individuals are capable of continual growth. It is the gift of perpetual youth; and most of us sink, early or late in our lives, into a state of intellectual self-complacency or indolent doubtfulness. We settle down to one point of view, and naturally enough our intellectual horizon remains eternally the same, as we gaze constantly on one side of each object, forgetting that there are at least four other—may be an indefinite number—of sides. [MS. diary, August 1887.]

And here are my reflections, on the day of publication in the *Nineteenth Century*, of my first essay as a recognised social investigator.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Yesterday we gave up York House; and my article on Dock Life appears in the *Nineteenth Century*:<sup>1</sup> exit hateful association, enter promising beginning . . . it is the work I have always longed to do, the realisation of my youthful ambition. . . . This summer I dawdled, and wrote my paper with no enthusiasm and little effort. It was accepted by the leading review, and is now printed two months after acceptance.<sup>2</sup> Two years ago I should have trembled with delight. Now I look upon it as only the natural result of my labour . . . I know I have no talent, that I am almost lacking in literary faculty. But I have originality of aim and method, and I have faith that I am in the right track, and I have a sort of persistency which comes from despair of my own happiness. My success will depend on my physical strength and on whether I have sufficient moral back-bone to banish self with its dark shadow, so that I may see things in their true proportion without morbid exaggeration of what is painful. [MS. diary, September 30, 1887.]

One of the results of my notoriety as a female expert on dock labour appears in the following entry:

Meeting at the Tabernacle, Barking Road, Canning Town. I was advertised to appear at this meeting of dock labourers. The hall was crowded, the men fine, determined, though quiet-looking set, far superior to the run of dock labourers at the dock gates. I was the only woman present, and as I made my way up to the platform enjoyed my first experience of being "cheered" as a public character. In the little room behind the platform were assembled the speakers of the evening, at which the renowned X. Y. was advertised to appear. The chairman, Alderman Phillips, was a pleasant, good, little fellow, with the small commonplace head and kindly features denoting hard-working philanthropy. Two or three councillors; among others a self-important little man who bustled into the room exclaiming "Well, what's it all about? what's one to say?" and then, without waiting for an answer, "I suppose the usual thing, elevation of the working class: grandeur of unity, etc. etc." There was a considerable confusion in the minds of the other

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, October 1877.

<sup>2</sup> This article was afterwards included in the first instalment of Charles Booth's enquiry published in the spring of 1889. In the final edition (1902) it appears as the first chapter of vol. iv., *Poverty Series*.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

speakers as to what they *were* to say; for, with the exception of the secretary of the newly formed association, they none of them knew anything about labour or dock trade. I was pressed to second the resolution, but absolutely refused to speak. Secretary Tillett opened the proceedings. A light-haired little man with the face of a religious enthusiast; might have been a revivalist. Honest undoubtedly, but ignorant and unwise. He ranted against white slavery, subcontract and irregular hours. I do not think the meeting was impressed, though they applauded his denunciation of subcontract. He went on indefinitely until the chairman checked him, and whispered that he had better keep to the point and propose the resolution. There followed the series of councillors, whose words hardly justified their title. A small man with a loud voice, a professional speaker, accustomed to fill up gaps at public meetings, pranced up the platform and shouted loudly, "When I see on the one side of me the starved dock labourers with faces marked by the intolerable lines of overwork, surrounded by a wretched family, a wife worn by strain, worry and labour, and on the other side of me the bloated official of the dock company with his brougham, his well-built house and his servants, I feel and I say that, etc. etc." Happily at this moment the bulky form of X. Y. was seen wending its way to the platform. No one knew him except the secretary. He took the seat nearest to me, and asked the chairman to give him the resolution to look at. Then in a stage whisper to the secretary, "I will give you £20, but don't let my name appear. I don't want it to be known. Of course you will support me about foreign immigration." When on his legs I examined him. He is a big man, with a red and somewhat bloated face, and an equally corpulent body; black eyes with a suspicious tendency to fiery bloodshot, and a heavy black moustache and somewhat unctuous voice, and an intolerable gift of the gab. I was surprised, after his stage whisper, that the leading feature of his speech was the announcement of his gift of £20. He dwelt on the iniquity of pauper immigration; but to this audience of dock labourers his denunciation fell flat, seeing that foreigners do not patronise the dock gates. He spoke fluently with the customary three adjectives at every turn. No sooner had he sat himself down than he offered to take me back in his brougham, which I promptly accepted. He was considerably "cheered" as we left the platform; and I followed meekly in the train of the hero who had given £20. The man who opened the door of his brougham refused to take the tip offered, which X. Y. characterised as "noble." The interest of the conversation in our long



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

drive homeward was slightly spoilt by the strong smell of spirit which the philanthropist transferred to the atmosphere of the closed brougham. I suggested that the night air was pleasant; and to my extreme relief he forthwith opened the window. His talk was the usual sympathy with the trouble and poverty of the lower classes, interspersed with "When I saw Gladstone the other day," "Only this day week I was staying with Tennyson," "The day I had worked at the docks I went to lunch with Lord Rothschild." We touched on the population question, and he said somewhat alarmingly, "I need a noble woman to help me," at which I started back, as just previously he had asked me to supper with him, which I refused. Whether it was the effect of the public meeting or of the spirit, X. Y. became rather too confidential. I was disgusted with his reference to family life as a curse to a man: a delicate wife, it seems, expected him to live with her for seven months out of the twelve. "Of course if your family sympathises with your work it is all very well," was his response to my assertion that family life was the only thing worth living for. [MS. diary, December 1, 1887.]

The essay on "Dock Life in East London" was, even in my own estimation, an inferior piece of work; the investigations had been scamped for lack of time, and my conclusions with regard to the disease of under-employment and its possible prevention, though sound as far as they went, were neither exhaustive nor sufficiently elaborated to be helpful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The conclusions I reached are thus summed up: "In the individualism run wild, in the uncontrolled competition of metropolitan industry, unchecked by public opinion or by any legislative regulation of employment, such as the Factory Acts, it seems impossible for any set of individuals, whether masters or men, to combine together to check the thoughtless and useless caprices of that spoilt child of the nineteenth century—the consumer. A possible remedy is a kind of municipal socialism, which many of us would hesitate to adopt, and which in the case of the docks and waterside would take the form of amalgamation under a Public Trust—a Trust on which the trader, consumer and labourer would be duly represented. This would facilitate a better organisation of trade and admit the dovetailing of business. And supposing the Public Board did not undertake to provide the labour, they could at least throw open the gates to a limited number of labour contractors working under legislative regula-

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

But its immediate acceptance for publication by the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* encouraged me to undertake another task in connection with the Booth enquiry.

Settled with Charlie on the autumn's work; The Sweating System is to be the subject of my next paper. I have it in mind to make it more of a picture than the article on Dock Labour, to dramatise it. I cannot get this picture without living among the actual workers. This I think I can do. [MS. diary, August 12, 1887.]

The note of self-pity characteristic of the MS. diary of 1884-87 is now superseded by a strain of self-complacency—"the second commonest of all human failings," Mr. Arthur Ponsonby will doubtless observe in his next volume on English diaries !

Lunched with Knowles [the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*]. He was very polite, and not only offered to take the article on the Sweating System, but proposed one on Co-operation—the very subject I had thought of writing on in the summer. I expect I shall do the Sweating System for C. Booth, and that "The Present State of Co-operation in England" will be my next paper in the *Nineteenth Century*. Altogether, I am hopeful. I have made a steady rise in literary capacity, as my diary shows. There is no reason why I should not rise further. [MS. diary, November 1887.]

The enquiry into the sweating system, eventually narrowed down to sweating in the manufacture of cheap clothing, resulted in five separate essays, four appearing as articles in the *Nineteenth Century* and (including two of the former) three as additional chapters of Charles Booth's first volume,

tions, who would be enabled by the extent of their business to maintain permanent staffs of workmen. I believe that the idea of a Public Trust is not regarded as without the sphere of practical politics by dock and waterside authorities." [Charles Booth's Final Edition (1902) *Poverty Series*, vol. iv., chapter on "The Docks," by Beatrice Potter, pp. 33-4.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

published in the spring of 1889.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, my determination to present "a picture" as well as a monograph led me into an experiment in the craft of a social investigator which brought in its train some temporary notoriety; and consequences, pleasant and unpleasant.

Whilst yet in the country, I started to plan out my campaign, so that the autumn and spring holiday months should be used to the greatest advantage. All the volumes, blue books, pamphlets and periodicals bearing on the subject of sweating that I could buy or borrow were read and extracted; the Charles Booth secretariat was asked to supply particulars of the workshops within the area selected for exploration, classified according to the numbers employed in each; friends and relatives were pestered for introductions to public authorities, philanthropic agencies and all such business enterprises (not only wholesale and retail clothiers, but also shippers, sewing-machine companies and others) as were likely to have contact with East End workers, whether subcontractors or wage-earners. Once settled at the Devonshire House Hotel, my time was mainly occupied in interviewing employers and employed, School Board Visitors,

<sup>1</sup> The four essays appearing in the *Nineteenth Century* were "Dock Life in the East End of London," October 1887; "The Tailoring Trade of East London," September 1888; "Pages from a Workgirl's Diary," October 1888; and "The Lords Committee on the Sweating System," June 1890. Of these, "Dock Life," "The Tailoring Trade," together with a separate essay on "The Jewish Community of East London," were included in Charles Booth's first volume, published in 1889; and in his final edition of 1902 are to be found in *Poverty Series*, vols. iii. and iv. Over and above these essays there was a paper read at the Co-operative Congress, 1892, "How to do away with the Sweating System." Three of these essays, "The Diary of an Investigator," "The Jews of East London" and "How to do away with the Sweating System," are republished in our *Problems of Modern Industry*, by S. and B. Webb, 1898.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

Factory and Sanitary Inspectors and members of the Jewish Board of Guardians; in visiting home-workers and small masters whom I happened to know, and in accompanying rent-collectors, or the collectors of payments due for the hire of sewing-machines, on their rounds of visits. In the intervals of these interviews and observations I trained as a trouser-hand, successively in the workrooms of the Co-operative Wholesale Society and in the "domestic workshop" of a former tenant of Katherine Buildings, by way of preparation for "finding work" during the busy season of the spring months.

Here are sample entries from the MS. diary of the autumn and winter of 1887-88:

Read through all the back numbers of the *Briton* [I write early in September while still at The Argoed], a paper devoted to crusade against sweating and foreign immigration; sensational outcry and unproven facts; principal contributor a certain Jew, A. B., author of pamphlet on Sweating System. Thinking he was an enthusiast, I asked for interview and enclosed 5s.

We met at C. Booth's office. Small man with low retreating forehead and retreating chin; failed to explain anything, and utterly ignorant of the facts even about the workers. Said he did not believe in usual methods of trade unionism and disapproved of co-operative production (disapproval afterwards explained by Mr. Barnett). A "Member" friend of his was going to introduce a Bill to abolish sweating; he [A. B.] intended "giving the House of Commons a chance of remedying the grievances of the workers"; if it failed to do so, *he* knew what he should advise the workers to do—though he would not tell us the nature of his advice. The society of which he was secretary numbered two hundred; and yet it was going to transform the condition of the London tailors!

Mr. Barnett, with whom I afterwards dined, told me he was a regular scamp, and embezzled the funds of a co-operative society; lived on his wits. I felt rather ashamed of my gift of 5s., and anxious to retreat from my new acquaintanceship. So long as Socialism has as exponents this sort of man there is little danger that it will enlist the sympathies of the better sort of workman. [MS. diary, September 1887.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Arkell [one of Charles Booth's secretaries] dined here yesterday. Have asked him to colour map, so as to see exactly where the trades are localised. [MS. diary, October 4, 1887.]

My first experience of the tailoring shops was in the easy form of a friendly visit, under my own name, to a "sweater" to whom I was introduced as an enquirer by one of the tenants of Katherine Buildings. This was, in fact, an "interview" under informal conditions, and it finds record as such in my diary.

First morning learning how to sweat; Mrs. Moses, Oxford Street, Stepney. Four rooms and a kitchen, 12s., one room let, 3s. Street deserted during daytime, with public-houses at each corner. A small backyard. Three rooms on ground floor, two used as workshop; two machinists, Polish Jews; the master acts as presser. In back room mistress and first hand, a Scottish woman, and two girls learning the trade. Coats turned out at 1s. 2d. each, trimmings and thread supplied by the sweater. Buttonholes 4½d. a dozen by woman outside. Mistress said the woman by working very hard could earn 10s. a week, with 2s. deducted for silk. Evidently these people work tremendously hard; woman working from eight to ten without looking round, and master working up to two o'clock, and often beginning at five the next morning. The mistress was too busy to give me much information; and I did nothing but sew on buttons and fell sleeves. They all seemed very pleasant together. Went next morning, but they were too busy to let me in; they had to "drive" to get [work delivered in time] into shop. The master was grumpy and suspicious; go there on Monday. [MS. diary, October 1887.]

Monday morning the work is slack for plain hands; Moses preparing coats for machines, and Mrs. Irons, the Scottish woman, helping him. The other young woman had taken her departure; she was not satisfied with 2s. 6d. a week and her training. . . . Mrs. Moses was communicative and told me about her business. She and her husband worked for Hollington's; but foreman was brutal and pay wretched; now she worked for Rylands, export firm. For coats she was paid 1s. 6d. each, she finding the thread. She paid 4½d. a dozen for buttonholes; and the widow who undertook this work might earn 10s. a week, with deductions of 2s. for

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

silk. First machinist paid 6s. a day; second, 3s.; the Scottish woman, 1s. 6d. Mr. Moses worked early and late during the coat season. The slack season was the bad time for them; they "rid" themselves of the little furniture they had. Certainly, if the workshop was indicative of the rest of the house, there was not much capital to fall back on: one or two deal tables whereon to set the work; a broken-down settee and a few chairs; a ragged bit of blue paper tacked on to the mantelpiece, and a broken vase and one or two old lamps, were the only visible signs of subsistence for out-of-work days. Mrs. Moses' dress was of the dirtiest and most dishevelled. Mrs. Moses' history was briefly this. She was born in London, and had never been in the country; three years ago she had been up at the West End to the "Healtheries" [the Exhibition at South Kensington], treated by a brother-in-law. She went about once a year to the theatre, never to the synagogue. She had children by her first husband, and her second husband had a son. Presently she went to buy a bit of dinner, returning with a fresh haddock. . . . Later on, I had a chat with Mrs. Irons, while Mrs. Moses was washing the haddock in the backyard. She also had her history of troubles. Was brought up a tailor's girl in Glasgow, married a professional street-singer, who had for some time kept a public-house. But her husband turned out badly and now she was back at the tailoring with eyesight failing. To-day she had brought a basin of stew for her lunch. She worked as long as Moses wanted her—sometimes till ten o'clock—and spoke in a friendly way of her master and "Missus," and was kindly with the girl. She had been thirteen weeks out of work before she found this place. Given to cant, but a sober and respectable woman. Told me that drunkenness had decreased, but not immorality; "no young girl thought any worse of herself for getting into trouble," and none of them were satisfied with going to service.

The third morning another young woman came in to learn the trade; work wretched, but both Mrs. Moses and Mrs. Irons were good to her. Told me that she was come to learn the trade, and that she should stay if her work suited them; thought to myself, it will be a long time before your work will be worth the trouble of your training. . . . I worked four days with Moses family, and we parted excellent friends. The work must have been bad, for my sewing, they said, was too good for the trade! [MS. interviews, October 1887.]

Interviewed H. and G. firms [Wholesale Clothiers]. Long conversation with principal partners in each case. J. G. was a

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

haw-hawy young man in "masher" clothes, with silver-tipped cane and camellia in his buttonhole. Said there had been a revolution in the tailoring trade; small tailors were being wiped out. It was "now a trade in which capitalists invested money, and worked on wholesale scale." Profits regulated according to fixed scale based on cost of production. For instance, if two contracts were taken for same cloth and same pattern, at a higher and a lower price, the manager gave out the work at corresponding figures, and if one middleman did not choose to take the lower-priced garment, another did. As to provincial production for stock and export, it was undercutting London. . . . For work at a certain figure undoubtedly the factory system was most to be relied on, but of course you could not get style, or even much fit, if all the coats were cut out by machinery. Admitted that starvation wages were given by some middlemen. . . . H., wholesale clothier (was a true little grinder), had a fussy self-important air, nervous manner, and shrewd money-making expression. Scrupulously attired, with orchid in his buttonhole. "Work paid better than it ever was; middlemen confoundedly independent; if one man refuses a job, no one else will take it." Said that, for strength and honesty of work, undoubtedly provincial factory system was to be preferred, and if he [H.] could afford to wait he sent down to the provinces. He did very little bespoke work; firm entirely wholesale, dealing principally in contracts. Was disgusted with sensationalism and Burnett's Report.<sup>1</sup> [MS. Interviews, Wholesale Clothing Trade, October 1887.]

<sup>1</sup> This summarily condemned Parliamentary Paper was the Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System at the East End of London, by the Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade, September 1887, H.C. 331 of 1889.

John Burnett, who became one of my best friends in the world of labour, was born at Alnwick, Northumberland, in 1842, became, after the Nine Hours' Strike, a lecturer for the National Education League, and joined the staff of the *Newcastle Chronicle*. In 1875, on Allan's death, he was elected to the general secretaryship of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. He was a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress from 1876 to 1885. In 1886 he was appointed to the newly created post of Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade, in which capacity he prepared and issued a series of reports on Trade Unions and strikes. On the establishment of the Labour Department in 1893 he became Chief Labour Cor-

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

Amusing interview with L., factory inspector [at] Home Office. Square-built man, with general impression of checked suit : I will not swear that his three garments were all check ; but the general effect was a mottled and crossed appearance. Red face, tiny greeny-grey eyes, and fat hands ; whiskers and hair of the same tint as his eyes ; hair rapidly receding from his forehead. He welcomed me with a funny self-important air ; he was " delighted to see me in connection with a subject that had occupied so much of his thought." He knew that my object was to do good, etc. etc. That had been *his* object, and he had laboured night and day to accomplish it. And then he opened out in a burst of indignation against the Board of Trade and Burnett's Report. He thought it disgraceful, stealing men's brains ; that is what Burnett had done. He had come to him, and cross-examined him and put all he said, without acknowledgement, into this report (Burnett had told me that L. had refused to give him any information). What did the Board of Trade know about sweating ? What could it know ? " I, on the other hand," continued Mr. L., " have ferreted all the evil out, have spent sixteen hours out of the twenty-four in the service of the Government, on this particular question. I know all the iniquity that goes on in the East End ; and mind what I say, Miss Potter, it will not stop until the factory inspector has more power." Charlie [Booth] became very impatient with this tirade and cut it short by asking for special and definite information. L. then gave us the usual hackneyed account of " Sweating," a great deal of which we recognised as inexact and absurdly sensational. Then Charlie, rather unwisely, asked him bolt out : would he give him list of names and addresses of sweaters ? " No," said L., somewhat testily, " I can't do that." And then as Charlie explained his object, Mr. L. smiled at him with conscious superiority, as much as to say, " You all of you are amateurs, and think you know a great deal ; but your ideas are impracticable." All this was simply the result of the lack of sympathy C. had shown to the man's wounded vanity. Altogether, I was sorry I had not been alone with him ; I should have managed him better, with softer and less direct treatment. As it was, we got nothing out of him, except the picture of a man smarting under the consciousness

respondent under the Commissioner for Labour and was selected to visit the United States to prepare a report on the effects of Jewish immigration. He retired in 1907 and died in 1914. [See *The History of Trade Unionism 1666-1920*, by S. and B. Webb, 1920 Edition, pp. 314-15, describing the Nine Hours' Strike.]



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

of another man reaping the fruits of what he considered he had sown. A good moral. The personal element in work is contemptible [MS. Interviews, Wholesale Clothing Trade, November 5, 1887.]

At this point my autumn holiday ended, and I returned to attendance on my father.

I have a good amount of loosely gathered material [I write after spending three months with my father at Bournemouth]. C. B. has a certain amount of statistical information. Remains to be done: a complete statistical basis giving proportionate statement of various classes of trades; and description of different types of tailoring, so that I may give picturesque account of technique. The leading ideas to be embodied in the paper: (1) correspondence of low form of faculty with low form of desire; absence of responsible employer; effect of foreign immigration on trade, with proportion of foreigners engaged in trade. [MS. diary, February 5, 1888.]

Last days at Bournemouth. Hardly expect to return here. If father lives, we shall move to Wimbledon next winter.<sup>1</sup> Very happy during these peaceful months, reading English history and literature. Long rides and short walks, and listening to the band. Not felt it waste of time, as I needed more study; though of course I should have preferred to work straight onward with the investigation. But I am so accustomed to take things as they come, and be thankful, that it is little trouble to me to break in upon my plan. And now I enjoy my life. I have fair health, faith in my own capacity to do the work I believe in, and I have regained my old religious feeling, without which life is not worth living to one of my nature. Intend to spend ten days of my holiday in the West End, before I settle in to work. And then a hard pull and a long pull to get the material wherewith to make a really graphic picture of the London tailoring trade. Thirty years is a good deal of sand in the hour-glass; and I must justify all this long period of silent intellectual seed-time by fruit.

<sup>1</sup> After my youngest sister's marriage to Arthur Dyson Williams in the autumn of 1888, and after wintering once again at Bournemouth, I moved my father to a small house (which became my permanent home until my father's death in January 1892) belonging to my sister Mary Playne, and close to her husband's place in Gloucestershire.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

One good thing done; Herbert Spencer cured, at least for the present. Living with us gave him courage to rise out of his state of lethargy, and take to active life again. Now I hear he is running about London, and thoroughly enjoying society. Poor old man! It is a comfort to think one has been a help to him, and a small return for his constant intellectual guidance and sympathy.

The leading idea of my paper will be the correspondence of low faculty with low desire: proof of this—picture of life in a sweater's den, picture of life of a man who wears the coat.

Shall turn my back on Society, except in so far as it is likely to be useful to my work. . . . [MS. diary, February 12, 1888.]

This question of "Society" had been troubling me for some time.

I do not wish to forgo the society of my own class—and yet to enjoy means wasted energy [I wrote a few months before the last entry]. Late hours, excitement, stimulants and unwholesome food, all diminish my small stock of strength available for actual work. And society has another drawback; it attracts one's attention away from the facts one is studying, so that the impression is not so keen and deep. To take a clear impression, the intellect must be in a peculiar state—strong, and yet for the moment blank. That is why I find so much difficulty in working at two subjects at the same time—the facts of the one efface the facts of the other. And when striking personalities intervene with the complicated problems of their lives, it is so hard to drive them out of one's thoughts. For the men and women of society are, naturally enough, more interesting, as psychological studies, than the men and women with whose circumstances you are not familiar, whose phraseology you do not quickly understand. Gradually, if you give way, the ogre, society, sucks you in, and you are lost to the bigger world of common-life.

I see before me clearly the ideal life for work—[I continue] I see it attainable in my present circumstances. Love and cheerfulness in my home-life; faithful friendship with a few—to those tied to me by past association, to those bracing me by moral genius, to those who will aid me to judge truthfully—and, lastly, charity and sympathy towards women of my own class who need it, whether they be struggling young girls, hard-pressed married women or disappointed spinsters. Every woman has a mission to other women—more especially to the women of her own class and circumstances. It is difficult to be much help to

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

men (except as an example in the way of persistent effort, and endurance in spite of womanly weakness). For, do what one will, sentiment creeps in, in return for sympathy. Perhaps as one loses one's attractiveness this will wear off—*certainly* it will! At present it is only with working men one feels free to sympathise without fear of unpleasant consequences. . . . [MS. diary, December 1887.]

Early in March I am once again at the Devonshire House Hotel: "trying to grasp my subject—the trade and labour questions of East End Tailoring," I write in my diary; and wishing "that I had more strength and pluck."

So the first six weeks of my enquiry ends [I write four weeks later]. Think I have broken the crust, and am now grubbing at the roots of the subject. But much definite work I have not done. Most of my time spent in training as a "plain hand" and it remains to be seen whether my training will be of real use. Anyway, it has given me an insight into the organisation, or, in this case into the want of organisation, of a workshop, and into the actual handicraft of tailoring.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise my life has been extremely interesting, and I am more than ever assured that *I have capacity*. . . . And now there are no conflicting desires and few conflicting duties. "Society," even now that it is unusually gracious and flattering, has no charm for me. The other night, as I returned from a distinguished party to which I had been enticed, I felt that I should not regret the loss of attraction (as I shall inevitably lose it), for I did not care for the result. Only for my work should I fear the loss of the woman's charm; undoubtedly it smooths out obstacles. But then I am so plan-

<sup>1</sup> The Report of John Burnett, the Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade, on the Sweating System in Leeds, 1888, recalls to my memory a visit to Leeds at Whitsuntide 1888 (unrecorded in the MS. diary), in order to compare provincial with metropolitan conditions. "Miss Beatrice Potter was in Leeds collecting facts on the state of trade there, and by her kindness I was allowed to attend meetings which she had arranged between herself and the workmen, and herself and the masters. With her I also saw Mr. Abraham, a Jewish Rabbi stationed at Leeds, who is remarkably well informed on most phases of the question then interesting the Jewish community." [Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System in Leeds, C. 5513, 1888.]

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

ning my life that the work I need it for will be done before I lose it ! [MS. diary, March 28, 1888.]

The last days of my active life for some months to come. On the whole I have been very happy—full of interest and blessed with content. I have not felt living alone. My work is now all in all to me. When I am not at work I sit and dream, and chew the cud of all I see and hear; when I am utterly exhausted I am not depressed; only satisfied to wait for returning strength. Prayer is a constant source of strength: to sit in that grand St. Paul's, with its still silent spaces; there is a wonderful restfulness in that House of God. And I enjoy the life of the people at the East End; the reality of their efforts and aims; the simplicity of their sorrows and joys; I feel I can realise it and see the tragic and the comic side. To some extent I can grasp the forces which are swaying to and fro, raising and depressing this vast herd of human beings. My painstaking study of detail will help towards the knowledge of the whole, towards which I am constantly striving; I shall leave steps cut in the rock, and from its summit man will eventually map out the conquered land of social life. [MS. diary, May 5, 1888.]

More than half through my paper, with the rest thought out [I record six weeks after my return to The Argoed]. I think it will be a clear detailed and comprehensive account of the facts of the Tailoring Trade; but it will be too matter-of-fact for the taste of the public—too much of a study of economic life, and not sufficiently flavoured with philanthropy. [MS. diary, June 28, 1888.]

It was during the spring of 1888 that I experimented in the art of investigation, by getting employment as a "plain trouser hand" in several workshops, being soon dismissed from the first, but voluntarily leaving the last and (from the standpoint of the worker) lowest of the lot, in order "to better myself," when I had secured all the information I required. In this brief adventure, besides verifying my second-hand information about the conditions of employment, I obtained the material for my one and only literary "success"—"The Pages of a Workgirl's Diary," published in the *Nineteenth Century* (October 1888)—a cheap triumph,

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

seeing that the article was little more than a transcript of the MS. diary, with the facts just enough disguised to avoid recognition and possible actions for libel; and experiences sufficiently expurgated to be "suited to a female pen"! "Mais oui, vous avez fait un succès avec ce 'Pages of a Workgirl's Diary'," observed the brilliant Frenchwoman and candid friend, Marie Souvestre.<sup>2</sup> "Mais

<sup>1</sup> Republished as "The Diary of an Investigator" in *Problems of Modern Industry*, by S. and B. Webb, 1898. In this essay I omitted the references in my MS. diary to the prevalence of incest in one-room tenements. The fact that some of my workmates— young girls, who were in no way mentally defective, who were, on the contrary, just as keen-witted and generous-hearted as my own circle of friends—could chaff each other about having babies by their fathers and brothers, was a gruesome example of the effect of debased social environment on personal character and family life, and therefore on racial progress. The violation of little children was another not infrequent result. To put it bluntly, sexual promiscuity, and even sexual perversion, are almost unavoidable among men and women of average character and intelligence crowded into the one-room tenement of slum areas, and it is the realisation of the moral deterioration involved more than any physical discomfort, that lends the note of exasperated bitterness characteristic of the working-class representatives of these chronically destitute urban districts.

<sup>2</sup> Marie Souvestre, daughter of the Academician Emile Souvestre—"le philosophe sous les toits"—became the headmistress proprietor of a fashionable boarding-school, at first at Fontainebleau and then at Wimbledon. She was intimate with the radical and free-thinking set, Morley, Chamberlain, Leslie Stephen, the Frederic Harrisons, Mrs. Richard Strachey and Mrs. J. R. Green and their large circles of like-minded friends. I give one entry descriptive of her meeting with her intellectual antithesis, Auberon Herbert: "Auberon Herbert dropped in before lunch yesterday. He was excited with the prospect of converting Mrs. Besant to spiritualism; she had written to him about his article in the *Pall Mall* and it will probably end in a visit to the Old House. Strange will be the intimacy between these two natures: Mrs. Besant, with her rabid Socialism, embittered, by personal suffering, against the morality and the creed of Christendom; and Auberon Herbert, with his idealistic individualism, a character

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

que le public anglais est bête ! ” [MS. diary, January 1889.] Smarting under the cold reception given to my elaborate monograph on “ The East End Tailoring Trade ” —a painstaking and, I think, thoroughly competent piece of work, appearing in the preceding issue of the *Nineteenth Century*—for which I had received from the editor one guinea per page as against two guineas per page paid for a dramatised version of but a few of the facts—I endorsed her judgment. And if by any chance the book that I am now writing should prove a “ better seller ” than the most intellectually distinguished of our works—*Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, 1689–1835* (which, I regret to say, has had but a small sale)—I shall see rising up before me the striking presence of my old friend, and hear her reiterate in ghostly but sarcastic tones, “ Mais que le public anglais est bête ! ”

softened and perhaps even weakened by perpetually dwelling on spiritual influences. While he and I were chatting in a friendly way, enter Mlle. Souvestre. The brilliant and irreligious French woman glanced with cold contempt at the strange figure of a man reclining on a sofa, advancing in his soft weak voice untenable propositions. It ended in a hot controversy in which I hardened into the Frenchwoman’s style of quick logical dispute. Auberon Herbert left with a pained expression, and with no favourable impression of the clever French schoolmistress, and her influence on his friend. After he had gone, Mlle. Souvestre softened into affectionate admiration and loving solicitude. A remarkable woman with a gift of brilliant expression, and the charm of past beauty and present attractiveness. Purely literary in her training, and without personal experience of religious feeling or public spirit, she watches these characteristics in others with an odd combination of suspicion, surprise, and what one might almost call an unappreciative admiration. You feel that every idea is brought under a sort of hammering logic, and broken into pieces unless it be very sound metal. If the idea belongs to the religious sphere and is proof against ridicule, it is laid carefully on one side for some future hostile analysis.” [MS. diary, March 10, 1889.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Such were the pleasant consequences of my adventure. Now for the unpleasant.

Gave evidence before the Lords Committee [on the Sweating System]. A set of well-meaning men, but not made of stuff fit for investigation. As they had forced me to appear, they treated me kindly, and lunched me in the middle of my examination. A few peeresses came down to stare at me . . . [MS diary, May 12, 1888.]

Four days after, there is another entry.

Disagreeable consequences of appearing in public. Descriptions of my appearance and dress; and offensive remarks by the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The economic side of the question is an unattractive one, and attracts abuse of all kinds from the least scrupulous class of men. [MS diary, May 16, 1888.]

In another ten days I am still more distressed:

Detestable misstatement of my evidence brings down unpleasant imputations; all the harder to bear as I was pressed into giving evidence, and was unwilling to speak of my personal experience of a workshop. [MS. diary, May 25, 1888.]

The "detestable misstatement" was, as far as I remember, an accusation that my evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords was, in substance, mendacious; that in the shops in which I had worked as a trouser-hand I was known and exceptionally treated; and that, accordingly, my statement of the workers' conditions was misleading. My accuser, the A. B. to whom I have already referred, said that he knew the workshop in which I had thus pretended to work. This was a misunderstanding which I was able easily to clear up by a letter to the newspapers; it was plain that A. B. had confused my first friendly interviews, at the workshops to which I had been introduced as an enquirer (described in the foregoing pages), with the transient engagements as a trouser-hand that I subsequently got for

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

myself at other workshops. But there was a fly in the ointment. In my hasty answers to the Lords' cross-examination, I had exaggerated the number of weeks during which I thus "worked"; and it was this exaggeration that got widely reported. When I received the proof of my evidence my conscience was sorely tried by the appended notice that no mistake was to be corrected other than any made by the short-handwriter or compositor. Was I to leave my own hasty exaggeration uncorrected? I disobeyed the injunction and scrupulously reduced the number of weeks to less than the truth. This double sin of saying what was not true, and then altering it in what seemed a sly way, caused me many sleepless nights. To this day I do not know whether witnesses are at liberty to correct their own statements as distinguished from misstatements of their evidence by the reporter. (The Other One tells me that I might have put the correction in a footnote; but how was I to know that? Moreover, that would have meant an admission of my inaccuracy!) Considering the difficulty, to the ordinary untrained man or woman, of answering unexpected questions with accuracy under the novel and disconcerting experience of being cross-examined, it seems desirable that witnesses should be permitted to correct, after quiet consideration, their own statements of fact and opinion, even if these have been correctly taken down by the shorthand-writer. What happens now is that the cautious and experienced witness refuses to be led beyond a reiteration of the contents of his "statement of evidence" deliberately prepared for circulation, whilst the flustered novice says what is not true, and, in nearly all cases, exactly what the more skilled of his examiners intend him to say! I remember an episode at an official enquiry, years afterwards, in which I took part. "I object to Mrs. Webb's unfair



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

cross-examination," complained one of my colleagues. The room was cleared. "Now, Mr. -----," said I in my blindest tone, "I have listened to you cross-examining a series of witnesses on the abstruse point of the effect on tenement occupiers of compounding for rates; and however ignorant of the whole subject-matter these witnesses may be, they invariably come out at your conclusion. So long as you pursue this policy I shall continue to make each successive witness say the exact contrary of what he has said to you." In the interests of national economy—for I pointed out that the travelling expenses and the shorthand report of each day's evidence cost at least one hundred pounds—he and I silently agreed to abandon our malpractice.

I skip eighteen months, in order to give the last scenes of my relation to the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System:

Dined with Lord Thring to meet Lord Monkswell to discuss the Dunraven draft report, and help to draft an opposition. Lord Thring is a dried-up little lawyer, upper-middle-class in origin, made a peer for many years' faithful service as head of the Parliamentary Drafting Office. His views are strictly economic; biased against sensationalism, against State interference; in fact the high and dry orthodoxy of 1850. The "sweating business" he regards as so much "gas." But with the present combustible state of public opinion a safety-valve must be provided. Hence in the Opposition Report he will deny all Dunraven's sensational premises, but declare that there *are* evils to be remedied (which he does not believe). The remedies he suggests are utterly insufficient to cure the evils—if they did exist—and *he knows it*. His attitude is typical of the time; he dare not *dare* public sentiment; so he suggests remedies which are absurdly roundabout, and bound to fail. "Of course we must pat Trade Unions on the back," said he, "but I will die on the floor of the House before I see Trade Unions made absolute by driving all workers into factories where they have unlimited opportunities for combination. Dunraven is playing the card of Tory democracy; representing the middle class as the tyrants of society; and himself, representing the Tory aristocracy, as the only guardians of

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

the interests of the poor. That is why it won't suit us to be quite frank," he adds with cynical candour. "We must go in for the evils as strongly as he does. But we must cut the ground from under his remedies."

After dinner, when we three were reading over and recasting Lord Thring's notes, I managed, "in cutting the ground from under Dunraven's remedies," to prepare the ground for my special erection, which will appear as a review of the two reports in the *Nineteenth Century*. If I can make them retain my proposal to transfer the factory inspectors to the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, or to the Local Government Board, I shall have laid the foundation for a thoroughly efficient Labour Bureau. The enforced publicity of all business accounts will be one step further. That done, we shall be on the right road to transforming all property-holders into voluntary officials of the State; paid by results instead of by salaries; and compelled by self-interest to inspect each other's work, the landlord the employer, the employer the landlord. Though I am suspected of Socialism, my anti-sensationalism gives me a footing among the sternest school of *laissez-faire* economists. This position must be guarded jealously, if I am to be of some little use as a reforming agency. [MS. diary, February 9, 1890.]

Uncomfortable dinner with Lord Thring and Mr. Vallance here [Devonshire House Hotel]—the Assessment Clerk to the Whitechapel Union. Lord Thring was as obstinate as an old dried-up lawyer of seventy could possibly be; would not listen to my conscientious official, but snubbed him severely. And to make matters worse, the church bells began to ring wildly so that our voices were drowned in spite of my determined shoutings. Poor old man; he came to chat with a good-looking woman, and found an enthusiastic reformer possessed by one idea, to make him accept a suggestion which he did not agree with. All the same, I think I shall get into the Lords' Report the thin edge of the wedge as to owners' [of the finished product; that is, the *original* "giver out" of the material to be made up] responsibility. His report, which he showed me, is three pages to Dunraven's seventy: it begins with my definition of sweating as certain conditions of employment; expressly omitting all reference to sub-contract, subdivision of labour, machinery, foreign immigration, to which Dunraven has devoted some twenty pages; it lays stress on the defencelessness of female labour, the badness of general sanitation. With regard to remedies, he proposes to repeal certain clauses of the Factory Act which disallow

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

the entry of the factory inspector into dwellings without a warrant from the magistrates; he adopts my idea of the transference of the Factory Department to the Board of Trade or Local Government Board, and lays stress on the advantages of publicity. Altogether, though it is utterly ineffective, the report is sound so far as it goes, and will serve as a foundation for my own proposals. [MS. diary, February 15, 1890.]

### AN ENCOURAGING DISCOVERY

The outcome of these studies in East End life, more particularly the examination of the manufacture of slop-clothing in the homes and workshops of the East End, was an attempt, and I think a successful attempt, to diagnose a specific social disease, and to suggest how it could be mitigated, and probably overcome.

All those who had hitherto interested themselves in the evils of the so-called "sweating system" had been obsessed with the sinister figure of the "sweater," or rather of an endless series of middlemen or sweaters, between the actual producer of slop-clothing or cheap furniture, and the citizen who eventually bought the article for his own use. Closely associated with the presence of this middleman, or these middlemen, was the practice of subdividing labour, so that the coat or the cabinet was the product, not of one skilled craftsman, but of a group of poverty-stricken employees, sometimes at work in the back premises of the sweater himself, and sometimes individually toiling night and day in their own one-roomed tenements. It was adding insult to injury in the eyes of patriotic British citizens that the evil ways of these "grinders of the face of the poor" were made easy by the inrush of Polish or Russian and German Jews, whose desperate plight compelled them to accept work at wages below the subsistence level of English workers. The following extracts from the evidence of the best-known explorers of the sweating

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

system will illustrate the state of informed public opinion at the time that I began my investigations.

"How do you define the Sweating System?" enquired a member of the House of Lords Committee of the then great authority on the subject—Arnold White, afterwards a Conservative M.P. "I think it is impossible to give a scientific definition of the term," he answered, "but it involves three ideas, which are sufficiently distinct. The broadest definition that I can give of a sweater is, one who grinds the face of the poor; the second is that of a man who contributes neither capital, skill, nor speculation, and yet gets profit; and the third is the middleman." [Question 404.]

"Any person who employs others to extract from them surplus labour without compensation is a sweater," exclaimed Lewis Lyons, a notorious socialist agitator. "A middleman sweater is a person who acts as a contractor for labour for another man. . . . A sweater is a person who practises a subdivision of labour for his own private ends. Now, my Lords, you will find that this definition speaks of a sweater as subdividing labour. The subdivision of labour in the tailoring trade would be about twenty-five, and I would just proceed to explain. [Etc.]" [Question 1772.]

"As an illustration of what I mean," stated William Parnell, the secretary of the Cabinetmakers' Trade Union, "I will say that if a firm gets an order to supply furniture to a customer, and the firm which gets that order does not itself manufacture the furniture, but gives it out to a sub-contractor, that is the first step in sweating. When these steps go from one to two, three, four, or five degrees, it is quite evident, and every man will admit, that that is sweating; but I think that the first step is as much sweating as the last. The real effect of it is to reduce both the quality of the article and the wages of the workman. I know of a case in which work has been obtained by a large firm and given out to a sub-contractor, who has given it out to another sub-contractor, who has given it out again to a man supposed to be his foreman, and the foreman has then given it out as piecework to the workmen. I will leave your Lordships to judge whether, if that had been made by the firm who obtained the order, the customer would not have received a better article, and also whether the man who made it would not have received better wages." [Question 2862.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

"Under any circumstances, this condition of affairs would have been fraught with misery for most of those engaged in such work," states John Burnett, the Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade in September 1887, "but matters have been rendered infinitely worse to the native workers during the last few years by the enormous influx of pauper foreigners from other European nations. These aliens have been chiefly German and Russian Jews, and there can be no doubt that the result has been to flood the labour market of the east end of London with cheap labour to such an extent as to reduce thousands of native workers to the verge of destitution. But for this special cause there would be no demand for enquiry on the subject. The evil, however, is becoming so intense as to raise a cry for its special treatment. The previous conditions of life of the unhappy foreigners who are thus driven, or come here of their own accord, are such that they can live on much less than our English workers. They arrive here in a state of utter destitution, and are compelled by the very necessity of their position to accept the work most easily obtained at the lowest rate of wages. In this way has grown up in our midst a system so bad in itself and so surrounded by adherent evils as to have caused, not only among the workers themselves, great suffering and misery, but in the minds of others grave apprehensions of public danger."<sup>1</sup>

Now, it was this conception of the sweating system and its causes that was embodied in the draft report of Lord Dunraven, the first chairman of the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System; a draft which was rejected by the majority of the committee under the chairmanship of Lord Derby and the leadership of Lord Thring. Lord Derby and his colleagues finally decided that sweating was no particular method of remuneration, no peculiar form of industrial organisation, but certain conditions of employment; "*earnings barely sufficient to sustain existence; hours of labour such as to make the lives of the workers periods of almost ceaseless toil; and sanitary conditions which are not only injurious to the health of the persons*

<sup>1</sup> Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System at the East End of London by the Labour Correspondent of the Board, September 12, 1887, p. 4. [H.C. 331 of 1889.]

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

*employed but dangerous to the public.*"<sup>1</sup> When any one of these conditions existed in extreme and exaggerated form—for instance, if a woman sewing neckties in her own home strained every nerve to earn only a halfpenny an hour—still more, when these conditions were combined, as in the cellar dwellings in which the Jewish boot-finishers worked sixteen or seventeen hours a day for a wage of 12s. per week—then the House of Lords Committee said that the labour was sweated, and that the unfortunates were working under the sweating system.

What were the causes of these evil conditions of employment? Had these causes been correctly described by the most prominent witnesses before the House of Lords Committee and in the official reports of Government Departments?

There was a measure of truth in John Burnett's statement that the evil conditions of sweating in some departments of industry had been initiated, or at any rate aggravated, by the inrush of poverty-stricken Jews. The ease with which the untiring and thrifty Jew became a master was proverbial in the East End. His living-room became his workshop, his landlord or his butcher his surety; round the corner he found a brother Israelite whose trade was to supply pattern garments to take as samples of work to the wholesale house; with a small deposit he secured, on the hire system, both sewing-machine and presser's table. Altogether, it was estimated that with £1 in his pocket, any man might rise to the dignity of a sweater. And, when one Jew had risen to the position of entrepreneur, there were always, not only the members of his own family, but also hundreds of

<sup>1</sup> Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System, 1888-89: Conclusions and Recommendations, pp. xlii and xliii.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

newcomers ready to become subordinates, many of whom were destined, in due time, to become his competitors. But the Jews had, at any rate, the merit that at the East End of London they "kept themselves to themselves"; for instance, they monopolised the slop-coat trade and boot-finishing; they seldom intruded into the manufacture of vests and trousers, or into the factories in which the machining of the work was done; and if the investigator surveyed all the industries in which the evil conditions of sweating prevailed, whether in the metropolis or in the provinces, the Jewish workers were found to be but a fraction of the whole body of workers, and also, to a large extent, a non-competing group, confined to the manufacture of certain commodities, in many instances commodities which had not been produced in the locality before. In short, if every foreign Jew resident in England had been sent back to his birthplace, the bulk of the sweated workers would not have been affected, whether for better or for worse.

But though the immigrant Jews served as raw material for the sweating system, no one suggested that they alone were responsible for what was deemed to be a particular type of industrial organisation. The real sinner, according to current public opinion, was the unnecessary middleman or middlemen, whether British or foreign, each middleman taking toll, like the mediæval baron, from all those who passed under his jurisdiction. Now what my observations and enquiries (verified by Charles Booth's statistics) had proved was that there were actually fewer middlemen between the producer and the consumer, and, be it added, far less subdivision of labour, than in the contrasted machine industry of the characteristic factory system, as seen not only in such staple industries as textiles or engineer-

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

ing, but also in the machine production of "ready-made" garments, or boots and shoes, in the well-equipped factories of Leeds or Leicester.

I pass now to my own explanation of the causes of the misery and degradation laid bare by the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System.

"How would you define the Sweating System?" I was asked by a member of the Committee.

"An enquiry into the Sweating System is practically an enquiry into all labour employed in manufacture which has escaped the regulation of the Factory Act and trade unions," I answered. [Question 3248.]

At this point I will quote from a paper that I read at the Co-operative Congress held at Rochdale, June 1892, supplemented by a quotation from the review in the *Nineteenth Century* for June 1890, on the Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System, 1888-89.

Some persons maintain that sweating is restricted to industries in which sub-contract prevails [I tell the Co-operative Congress of 1892]; that, in fact, it is the middleman who is the sweater; that this man grinds the face of the poor, and takes from them the fruits of their labour. You will remember a cartoon that appeared in *Punch* about the time of the House of Lords enquiry, in which the middleman was represented as a bloated man-spider sucking the life-blood out of men and women who were working around him. Now, before I studied the facts of East London industries for myself I really believed that this horrible creature existed. But I soon found out that either he was a myth, or that the times had been too hard for him, and that he had been squeezed out of existence by some bigger monster. For I discovered that in the coat trade, and in the low-class boot trade—which are exclusively in the hands of the Jews—where the work is still taken out by small contractors, these middlemen, far from being bloated idlers, work as hard, if not harder, than their sweated hands, and frequently earn less than the machinist or presser to whom they pay wages. On the other hand, in those trades in



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

which English women are employed—such as the manufacture of shirts, ties, umbrellas, juvenile suits, etc.—the middleman is fast disappearing. It is true that formerly the much-abused sub-contract system prevailed in these trades—that is to say, some man or woman would contract with the wholesale manufacturer to make and deliver so many dozen garments for a certain sum. He would then distribute these garments one by one in the homes of the women, or perhaps he would engage women to make them in his own house. He might receive a shilling for the making of each garment, but he would give only tenpence to the actual workers, pocketing twopence in return for his trouble and risk. But of late years the more enterprising wholesale manufacturers have thought it most unjust that the middleman should pocket the twopence. To remedy this injustice they have opened shops all over the East End of London, where they give out work just as the middleman used to do, first to be machined and then to be finished. But, strangely enough, they still pay tenpence to their workers, the only difference being that instead of the middleman getting the balance they pocket the twopence themselves. Nor do they trouble themselves in the very least where these garments are made. The women who support themselves and perhaps their families by this class of work live in cellars or in garrets, sometimes two or three families in one room. This does not concern the wholesale manufacturer. No doubt he would tell you that the middleman was the sweater and that he had destroyed him. But, unfortunately, he did not destroy, or even diminish, what the practical observer means by sweating. The actual worker gains absolutely nothing by the disappearance of the sub-contractor, middleman, or so-called sweater. In East London the change has been, so far as the workers are concerned, from out of the frying-pan into the fire.

And if we leave the clothing trade and pass to the lower grades of the furniture trades, in which all the evils of sweating exist, we may watch the poverty-stricken maker of tables and chairs hawking his wares along the Curram Road, selling direct to the export merchant, or to the retail tradesman—or perchance, to the private customer. In the manufacture of cheap boots in London, of common cutlery at Sheffield, of indifferent nails at Halesowen, we meet with this same sorrowful figure—the small master or out-worker buying his material on credit, and selling his product to meet the necessities of the hour; in all instances underselling his competitors, great and small. Respectable employers, interested in a high standard of production, trade unionists, keen for a high standard of wage, agree in attributing

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

to this pitiful personage the worst evils of the sweating system. Here, not only do we fail to discover the existence of sub-contract but even the element of contract itself disappears, and the elaborate organisation of modern industry is replaced by a near approach to that primitive higgling of the market between the actual producer of an article and the actual consumer—to that primæval struggle and trial of endurance in which the weakest and most necessitous invariably suffers.

I do not wish you to imagine that I deny the existence of the sweater in the sweated industries. But I deny that the sweater is necessarily or even usually the sub-contractor or employing middleman. The sweater is, in fact, the whole nation. The mass of struggling men and women whose sufferings have lately been laid bare are oppressed and defrauded in every relation of life: by the man who sells or gives out the material on which they labour; by the shopkeeper who sells them provisions on credit, or forces them under the truck system; by the landlord who exacts, in return for the four walls of a bedroom, or for the unpaved and undrained back-yard, the double rent of workshop and dwelling; and, lastly, by every man, woman and child who consumes the product of their labour. In the front rank of this, the most numerous class of sweaters, we find the oppressed workers themselves. The middleman where he exists is not the oppressor, but merely one of the instruments of oppression. And we cannot agree with *Punch's* representation of him as a spider devouring healthy flies. If we must describe him as a noxious insect we should picture him much more truly as the maggot that appears in meat after decay has set in. He is not the cause, but one of the occasional results of the evil. He takes advantage of the disorganised state of the substance which surrounds him, and lives on it; if he does not do so, some other creature will devour both him and his food. What we have to discover, therefore, is the origin of the disorganisation itself.

Now, in all the manufacturing industries in which "sweating" extensively prevails we discover one common feature. The great mass of the production is carried on, not in large factories but either by small masters in hidden workshops or by workers in their own dwellings. And, as a natural consequence of this significant fact, the employer—whether he be the profit-making middleman, wholesale trader, or even the consumer himself—is relieved from all responsibility for the conditions under which the work is done. The workers, on the other hand, incapacitated for combination by the isolation of their lives, excluded by special clauses from the protection of the Factory Acts, are delivered

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

over body and soul to the spirit of unrestrained competition, arising from the ever-increasing demand for cheap articles in the great markets of the world. If we compare this state of things with the industries in which sweating does not exist, we see at once that in the case of the engineer, the cotton-spinner or the miner the men work together in large establishments, and the employer becomes responsible for the conditions of their employment. The mill-owner, coal-owner or large iron-master is forced to assume, to some slight extent, the guardianship of his workers. He is compelled by the State to provide healthy accommodation, to regulate the hours of labour of women and young persons, to see to the education of children, to guard against and insure all workers against accident. Trade unions, arising from the massing of men under the factory system, insist on a recognised rate of wages. Public opinion, whether social or political, observes the actions of a responsible employer in the open light of day. Willingly or unwillingly, he must interpose his brains and his capital between groups of workers on the one hand, and the great mass of conscienceless consumers on the other. These are the services exacted from him by the community in return for the profits he makes. He is, in fact, the first link between the private individual intent on his own gain, and the ideal official of the Socialist State administering the instruments of production in trust for the people. It is the absence of this typical figure of nineteenth-century industry which is the distinguishing feature of the sweating system.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious [I write in my review of the Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System], if we wish to determine whether the presence of middlemen, machinery and subdivision of labour are at once the cause and the essence of the evils of sweating, we must take a wider survey of industrial facts than that afforded us by the four volumes of evidence published by the Committee. We must use the comparative method; we must lay side by side with the organisation of production in the sweated trades the organisation of production in those industries admittedly free from the grosser evils of sweating. In short, to discover what constitutes disease, we must compare the diseased body with the relatively healthy organism. . . .

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the twenty-fourth annual congress of Co-operative Societies, held at Rochdale, June 1892, by Beatrice Potter; see *Problems of Modern Industry*, by S. and B. Webb, 1898, pp. 140-5.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

In the staple manufactures of the kingdom—in the cotton, woollen, and manufactured metal trades—we find, as a general fact, three profit-making capitalist middlemen between the manual worker and the consumer: (1) the master of the factory or workshop; (2) the wholesale trader, supplying foreign agents and English shopkeepers; (3) the large or small retailer in direct contact with the consumer. At the present time [1890] this may be considered the typical organisation of English industry. In the manufacture of slop-clothing, the three profit-making middlemen, typical of English industry—the manufacturer, the wholesale trader and retail tradesman—are not multiplied; on the contrary, they are in many instances reduced to one or two hybrid figures—the small master who works as hard as, if not harder than, those he employs (and may be therefore considered, in many instances, as a manual worker), and the wholesale or retail tradesman, manufacturing to some extent on his own premises, and giving work out, not only to large and small masters, but direct into the homes of the people. . . .

Alike from the obligations and the expenses of the factory owner, the sweater is free. Meanwhile the slum landlord is receiving, for his cellars and attics, the double rent of workshop and dwelling without incurring the expensive sanitary obligations of the mill-owner. In short, it is home work which creates all the difficulties of our problem. For it is home work which, with its isolation, renders trade combination impracticable; which enables the manufacturer to use as a potent instrument, for the degradation of all, the necessity of the widow or the greed of the Jew. And more important still, it is home work which, by withdrawing the workers from the beneficent protection of the Factory Acts, destroys all legal responsibility on the part of the employer and the landlord for the conditions of employment. . . .

In this labyrinth of technical detail I have been led by the insinuating logic of facts again and again to the one central idea, round which gather scientific description and practical suggestion—an idea which has loomed larger and larger with a closer and more personal study of the suffering and degradation of the workers—an idea which I conceive to be embodied in all the labour legislation of this century: the direct responsibility, under a capitalist system of private property, of all employers for the welfare of their workers, of all property owners for the use of their property. From the denial of this personal service, in return for profits and rent, arise the dire evils of sweating—evils described in simple but touching words in the Lords' Report: "earnings barely sufficient to sustain existence; hours of labour

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

such as to make the lives of the workers periods of almost ceaseless toil, hard and unlovely to the last degree; sanitary conditions injurious to the health of the persons employed, and dangerous to the public." It will be through awakening the sense of this responsibility, through insisting on the performance of this duty, by legislative enactment, by the pressure of public opinion and by all forms of voluntary combination, that we can alone root out and destroy those hideous social evils known as the Sweating System.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Lords and the Sweating System," the *Nineteenth Century*, June 1890. I must not burden the reader with the subsequent history of this problem. But the student may find help in some brief references. The idea of the sub-contractor, the middleman, the alien or the Jew being the "cause" of sweating disappeared. Home work (more strictly "out work") was generally recognised as the evil. Only very slowly and very imperfectly did the suggestion get adopted of imposing on some one as employer a definite responsibility for the conditions under which the sweated home worker performed his or her task. The first stage was by way of what is known as the "particulars clause." The Factory Act of 1891, which quite failed to incorporate what I desired, did at least put upon the factory employer in the textile industries the obligation to supply all his weavers, and (in cotton) also winders and reelers, with written "particulars" of the terms on which they were working; and the amending Act of 1895 not only extended this to all textile workers but also enabled the Home Secretary to apply it to pieceworkers in non-textile factories or workshops. The "particulars clause" was accordingly so applied in 1897 to the manufacture of handkerchiefs, aprons, pinafores and blouses, and to that of chains, anchors and locks. (*Industrial Democracy*, by S. and B. Webb, 1897, pp. 310-11.) By subsequent orders in 1898 and 1900 it was applied to felt hat makers, to all textile workshops, to pen makers and, in this connection most important of all, to the wholesale tailoring trade.

The next stage was the obligation imposed upon all persons who gave out work to be done at home, to keep a register, open to inspection, of the names and addresses of these out workers, whose homes could thus be visited by the sanitary inspectors of the Local Health Authority. This was effected by the Factory Act of 1901, which not only re-enacted the above provisions but also (by section 116) authorised their extension to out workers in any trades required to keep registers of out workers. In 1903 the existing orders applying to felt hat making and the wholesale

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

To state my "discovery" dogmatically: it seemed to me that, unless "the capitalist system" was to destroy the

tailoring trade were extended to out workers; and in 1909 a comprehensive order was made applicable to the out workers in all the wearing apparel trades.

But although all this went in the direction of putting responsibility on the "giver out" of work, it amounted to little. We owe to the unwearied persistence of Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., and to Lady Dilke, in 1908 a House of Commons Select Committee on Home Work under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Whitaker, M.P., whose report (H.C. No. 246 of 1908), backed by renewed public agitation, led to the Trade Boards Act of 1909 (9 Edward VII., c. 22), which enabled the Board of Trade to apply, to any trade in which wages were exceptionally low, provisions permitting a joint board representative of employers, workers and the public, to fix minimum rates of wages for definite working hours, employment below which was made an offence. Incidentally (by section 9) this Act brought in the "shopkeeper, dealer or trader who made any arrangement express or implied with any worker," enacting that this "giver out of work" should be "deemed to be the employer," so as to become liable if the rates that he paid to his sub-contractor "after allowing for his necessary expenditure in connection with the work" were less than the legally fixed minimum rates.

This Act was amended, after nine years' experience, by the Trade Boards Act of 1918 (8 and 9 George V., c. 32), and has done much to raise the level of earnings, to lessen the excessive hours of labour, and to protect the worker from cheating and oppression throughout nearly the whole range of what used to be known as the sweated trades. The apparent tendency of all this legislation has been to drive the work into large factories, in which improved machinery and more efficient organisation reduce the cost of production so as to enable the better wages to be paid. (See *The Establishment of Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry*, by R. H. Tawney, 1915; *Minimum Rates in the Chain-making Industry*, by the same, 1914.)

A critical Departmental Committee appointed by the Ministry of Labour reported in 1922 (Cmd. 1645 of 1922) somewhat unsympathetically upon some of the details of the Trade Boards Acts, but no further legislation has ensued. What, in my opinion, now (1926) needs doing, in order to sweep away the remnants of the "Sweating System," is to carry into law my suggestion; and to make thus responsible, for the conditions of employment

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

body and soul of great masses of the wage-earners, it was imperative that "free competition" should be controlled, not exceptionally or spasmodically, but universally, so as to ensure to every one a prescribed National Minimum of Civilised Life. This, in fact, was the meaning that Factory Acts, Public Education, Public Health and Trade Unionism had been empirically and imperfectly expressing.

### A SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

My participation in Charles Booth's grand inquest into the life and labour of the people in London served as a training in the art of a social investigator and confirmed my faith in the application of the scientific method to social organisation.

In the course of this enquiry I had learnt the relation between personal observation and statistics. However accurate and comprehensive might be the description of technical detail, however vivid the picture of what was happening at the dock gates or in the sweated workshops, I was always confronted by Charles Booth's sceptical glance and critical questions: "How many individuals are affected by the conditions you describe; are they increasing or diminishing in number?" "What proportion do they bear to those working and living under worse or better conditions?" "Does this so-called sweating system play any considerable part in the industrial organisation of the four million inhabitants of London?" Thus, though I never acquired the statistical instrument because I had not the requisite arithmetic, I became aware that every conclusion of all persons working on the job (by whomsoever engaged), the original "giver out of work" the owner both of the material given out and of the finished article eventually returned to him who is ultimately the real employer, and who ought to accept all the responsibilities of the factory occupier.

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

derived from observation or experiment had to be qualified as well as verified by the relevant statistics. Meanwhile, in another part of the technique of sociology—the gentle art of interviewing—I think I may say that I became an adept. Hence I have ventured, at the end of this book, to offer to those readers who may happen to be “industrious apprentices” some hints about the method of the interview. But, as I quickly discovered, this way of extracting facts from another person’s mind has but a limited use; in many cases it has no value at all except as an introduction to opportunities for direct personal observation. Even direct observation has varying degrees of value according to the nature of the opportunity. For instance, I discovered more about dock labourers as a rent-collector than I did either by touring the docks along with officials or by my subsequent visits to dockers’ homes as an investigator. Observation is, in fact, vitiated *if the persons know that they are being observed*; and it was in order to avoid any such hampering consciousness that I decided to try my luck in getting work in a series of sweaters’ shops. Moreover, as a mere observer, having no position in the organisation, it is impossible to experiment. As the managers of Katherine Buildings, my colleague and I could select our tenants according to any principle or prejudice; we could, with the consent of the directors, raise or lower rents, permit arrears or ruthlessly put in the broker; and, having chosen a policy, we could watch its results on the number and character of the applicants, the conduct of the tenants or the profit and loss account of the buildings. “Experimenting in the lives of other people, how cold-blooded!” I hear some reader object. Is it necessary to explain that such “experimenting” cannot be avoided; that all administration, whether from the motive of profit-making or from that of



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

public service, whether of the factory or the mine, of the elementary school or the post office, of the co-operative society or the Trade Union—unless it is to be reduced by precedent and red tape to a mindless routine—necessarily amounts to nothing less than “experimenting in the lives of other people.” What is required to safeguard the community against callousness or carelessness about the human beings concerned is *that the administrator should be effectively responsible, for all the results of his administration, to the consumers and producers of the commodities and services concerned and to the community at large.* And it is essential, if we are to learn from such “experiments,” that the effect on other persons’ lives should be observed and recorded. Further, though it is perhaps a counsel of perfection, it is desirable (as Bismarck pointed out) that the administrator should learn not only from his own mistakes—which is expensive—but also from those of other persons. In short, there can be no sound administration, even for profit-making, without the use, consciously or not, of observation, inference and verification; that is to say, of the scientific method. The irony is that those persons who, as participators in an organisation, and wielding authority in its direction, have the most valuable opportunities for the use of the scientific method, usually lack the requisite training, if not also the leisure and the desire for this intellectual effort.

And here I must recall a queer, deep-rooted fallacy lying at the very base of Herbert Spencer’s administrative nihilism; an error in reasoning pervading the capitalist world in which I was brought up. Herbert Spencer asserted, and every capitalist assumed, that the system of profit-making enterprise with which we were all familiar, belonged to “the natural order of things,” whereas any

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

activity on the part of the State or the municipality, or even of the Trade Union, such as factory acts, public health administration, compulsory schooling and standard rates of wages, were "artificial" contrivances; or, to use the philosopher's own words, "clumsy mechanisms devised by political schemers to supersede the great laws of existence," and therefore bound—because they were "against nature"—to be social failures. For instance, a rate of wages determined by unrestricted individual competition was a "natural rate of wages"; a rate of wages determined by combination or by law was an "artificial wage," and therefore injurious to the commonweal.

To-day it is difficult to understand from whence came this curious fallacy; probably it arose, like so many other fallacies, from a muddle-headed use of words. For when we talk about things being natural, on the one hand, and artificial on the other; when we say, for instance, that a waterfall or a lake is natural or that it is artificial, we attach to these two adjectives definite meanings: in the one case the lake or the waterfall happens without the intervention of man; in the other case it is due to human artifice. But there is no such thing as social structure apart from human beings, or independent of their activity. Thus, strictly speaking, every development of social structure and function, from the family to a police force, from the institution of personal property to the provision of public parks and libraries, from the primitive taboo to the most complicated Act of Parliament, is alike "artificial," that is to say, the product of human intervention, the outcome of human activities. The plain truth is that to apply the antithesis of "natural" and "artificial" to social action is sheer nonsense. Anything that exists or happens to human nature in society, whether war or peace, the

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

custom of marriage or the growth of empire, the prevention of disease or the wholesale slaughter of battle, and "civilisation" itself, is equally "natural"; its very happening makes it so. Moreover, if antiquity or ubiquity be taken as a test of what is in conformity with a hypothetical "nature of man," governmental intervention and also vocational organisation (from the ancient castes of priests and warriors to the modern labour union) are not only far older in human history than the form of industrial organisation known as the capitalist system, with its divorce of the worker from the ownership of the instruments of production, but are also—when we remember the vast uncounted populations of Asia and Africa—actually more widely prevalent among the inhabitants of the earth to-day.

It is, indeed, obvious that every social transformation, every development of human society, necessarily amounts, whether we like it or not, to an experiment in the conduct of life. In the days of my capitalist bias I denounced, as interferences with the natural order of things, "these gigantic experiments, State education, State intervention in other matters which are now being inaugurated" (see p. 217). Why? Not, as I then thought, because these "interventions" were "against nature," but, as I now realise, because these particular experiments were at the cost of my class for the assumed benefit of another class. A study of British blue books, illuminated by my own investigations into the chronic poverty of our great cities, opened my eyes to the workers' side of the picture. To the working class of Great Britain in the latter half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century—that is, to four-fifths of the entire population—the "industrial revolution," with its wholesale adoption of power-driven machinery and the factory system, its breaking up of the

## OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENT

family as an industrial unit, and its summary abrogation of immemorial customs sanctioned by both religion and law (to which ruthless revolution, I may observe, my family owed its position of wealth—an explanation but not an excuse for my regarding it as peculiarly in “the natural order of things !”), must have appeared not only as artificial and unnatural, but also as a gigantic and cruel experiment which, in so far as it was affecting their homes, their health, their subsistence and their pleasure, was proving a calamitous failure.

My reaction from this fallacy was an ever-deepening conviction of the supreme value, in all social activity, of the scientific method.

“This ceaseless questioning of social facts,” the Ego that denies was always insisting, “seems an interesting way of passing the time, but does it lead anywhere ?”

The Ego that affirms could now answer with confidence :

“Seeing that society is one vast laboratory in which experiments in human relationship, conscious or unconscious, careless or deliberate, are continuously being carried on, those races will survive and prosper which are equipped with the knowledge of how things happen. And this knowledge can only be acquired by persistent research into the past and present behaviour of man.”

“How things happen !” mocks the Ego that denies, “but that does not settle what *ought* to happen.”

“I thought I told you long ago,” calmly answers the Ego that affirms, “that with regard to the purpose of life, science is, and must remain, bankrupt ; and the men of science of to-day know it. The goal towards which we strive, the state of mind in ourselves and in the community that we wish to bring about, depends on a human scale of values, a scale of values which alters from race to race, from genera-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

tion to generation, and from individual to individual. How each of us determines our scale of values no one knows. For my own part, I find it best to live 'as if' the soul of man were in communion with a super-human force which makes for righteousness. Like our understanding of nature through observation and reasoning, this communion with the spirit of love at work in the universe will be intermittent and incomplete and it will frequently fail us. But a failure to know, and the fall from grace, are the way of all flesh."

## CHAPTER VII

### WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST [1888-1892; ÆT. 30-34]

WHILST serving my apprenticeship under Charles Booth, I had reached a tentative conclusion about the most far-reaching "experiment in the lives of other people" that the world had then witnessed; though it has since been equalled in ruthlessness, and excelled in speed and violence, but not, I think, in thoroughness and permanence, by the Russian Revolution that began in 1917.

The industrial revolution in Britain, which had its most intense phase in the latter end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, cast out of our rural and urban life the yeoman cultivator and the copyholder, the domestic manufacturer and the independent handicraftsman, all of whom owned the instruments by which they earned their livelihood; and gradually substituted for them a relatively small body of capitalist *entrepreneurs* employing at wages an always multiplying mass of propertyless men, women and children, struggling, like rats in a bag, for the right to live. This bold venture in economic reconstruction had now been proved to have been, so it seemed to me, at one and the same time, a stupendous success and a tragic failure. The accepted purpose of the pioneers of the new power-driven machine industry was the making of pecuniary profit; a purpose which had been fulfilled, as Dr. Johnson observed about his friend Thrale's brewery, "beyond the dreams of avarice." Commodities of all sorts and kinds rolled out from the new factories at an always accelerating speed with ever-falling costs of

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

production, thereby promoting what Adam Smith had idealised as *The Wealth of Nations*. The outstanding success of this new system of industry was enabling Great Britain, through becoming the workshop of the world, to survive the twenty years' ordeal of the Napoleonic Wars intact, and not even invaded, whilst her ruling oligarchy emerged in 1815 as the richest and most powerful government of the time.

On the other hand, that same revolution had deprived the manual workers—that is, four-fifths of the people of ENGLAND—of their opportunity for spontaneity and freedom of initiative in production. It had transformed such of them as had been independent producers into hirelings and servants of another social class; and, as the East End of London in my time only too vividly demonstrated, it had thrust hundreds of thousands of families into the physical horrors and moral debasement of chronic destitution in crowded tenements in the midst of mean streets. There were, however, for the manual working class as a whole, certain compensations. The new organisation of industry had the merit of training the wage-earners in the art of team-work in manufacture, transport and trading. Even the oppressions and frauds of the capitalist profit-maker had their uses in that they drove the proletariat of hired men, which capitalism had made ubiquitous, to combine in Trade Unions and co-operative societies; and thus to develop their instinct of fellowship, and their capacity for representative institutions, alike in politics and in industry. Moreover, the contrast between the sweated workers of East London and the Lancashire textile operatives made me realise how the very concentration of wage-earners in the factory, the ironworks and the mine had made possible, in their cases, what the sweater's workshop, the independent

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

craftsman's forge and the out-worker's home had evaded, namely, a collective regulation of the conditions of employment, which, in the Factory Acts and Mines Regulation Acts on the one hand, and in the standard rates of wage and the normal working day of the Trade Unions on the other, had, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, wrought so great an improvement in the status of this regulated section of the World of Labour. It was, in fact, exactly this collective regulation of the conditions of employment, whether by legislative enactment or by collective bargaining, that had raised the cotton operatives, the coal-miners and the workers of the iron trades into an effective democracy; or, at least, into one which, in comparison with the entirely unorganised workers of East London, was eager for political enfranchisement and education; and which, as the chapels, the co-operative societies and the Trade Unions had demonstrated, was capable of self-government. I wished to probe further this contrast between the wage-earners who had enjoyed the advantages of collective regulation and voluntary combinations, and those who had been abandoned to the rigours of unrestrained individual competition. But I wanted also to discover whether there was any practicable alternative to the dictatorship of the capitalist in industry, and his reduction of all the other participants in production to the position of subordinate "hands." For it was persistently asserted that there was such an alternative. In this quest I did not turn to the socialists. *Fabian Essays* were still unwritten and unpublished; and such socialists as I had happened to meet at the East End of London belonged to the Social Democratic Federation, and were at that time preaching what seemed to me nothing but a catastrophic overturning of the existing order, by forces of whose



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

existence I saw no sign, in order to substitute what appeared to me the vaguest of incomprehensible utopias.

There was, however, another alternative lauded by idealists of all classes: by leading Trade Unionists and the more benevolent employers, by revolutionary socialists and by Liberal and Conservative philanthropists: an experiment in industrial organisation actually, so it was reported, being brought into operation on a small scale by enthusiastic working men themselves. This was the ideal of "self-employment," and the peaceful elimination from industry of the capitalist *entrepreneur*; to be secured by the manual workers themselves acquiring the ownership, or at any rate the use, of the capital, and managing the industry by which they gained their livelihood. It was this ideal, so I was told, that animated the Co-operative Movement in the North of England and the Lowlands of Scotland—a movement barely represented in the London that I knew.

There were, however, drawbacks to such a scheme of enquiry. It entailed breaking away from my fellow-workers in London, thus sacrificing skilled guidance and stimulating companionship. Further, I doubted whether I had the capacity and training to undertake, unaided, an enquiry into what was, after all, a particular form of business enterprise. Would it not be wiser to follow up one of the many questions opened out by Charles Booth's skilfully planned and statistically framed exploration of industrial London? For instance, he had suggested to me that I should take up the problem of the woman worker, with her relatively low standard of personal expenditure, her reputed willingness to accept wages below subsistence rates in aid of her husband's bare subsistence earnings, and even to work for mere pocket-money; whilst there was always haunting the dreary days of the sweated female

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

worker the alluring alternative of the gains of casual love-making, too often ending in professional prostitution. The following entries in my diary reveal my hesitation. I also give the frankly expressed opinion of the greatest living economist that I was unfit for the larger and more independent task; though whether this authoritative condemnation of my proposed enquiry into the Co-operative Movement diminished my desire or increased my determination to do what I had a mind to do is an open question !

In trouble—perplexed about my work [I write while I am still collecting facts for the chapter on the Jewish community]. Charlie wants me to do *Woman's Work at the East End*, and have it ready by March; it means sacrificing part of February [my spring holiday] to writing—at least a fortnight. Unless I could make it a part of a bigger subject, would cut into my free time without occupying the whole of it. It would unfortunately postpone Co-operation. On the other hand, female labour is a subject of growing importance: one which for practical purposes is more important than Co-operation. . . . Then the work is needed to complete Charles Booth's. I have already a mass of material in my head which could be used for it, and it would be doing work which lieth to my hand instead of seeking far afield for it. [MS. diary, November 3, 1888.]

Delightful visit to the Creightons<sup>1</sup> at Cambridge [I record six

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1888 I had been introduced to the Creightons by our common friend, Marie Souvestre. From that time onward I enjoyed their friendship, a privilege extended to The Other One when, four years later, he appeared as my betrothed. I often wonder how many of the young intellectuals of the 'eighties and 'nineties have, in later life, looked back on the days spent in this delightful family circle at Worcester or Cambridge, at Peterborough or Fulham, as one of the inspiring influences of their lives. In my memory Mandell Creighton appears as the subtlest, broadest-based and, I must add, the most elusive intellect, as well as one of the most lovable characters that I have come across in my journey through life. (See *The Life and Letters of Bishop Creighton*, by Louise Creighton.)

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

months later]. Interesting talk with Professor Marshall, first at dinner at the Creightons, and afterwards at lunch at his own house. It opened with chaff about men and women: he holding that woman was a subordinate being, and that, if she ceased to be subordinate, there would be no object for a man to marry. That marriage was a sacrifice of masculine freedom, and would only be tolerated by male creatures so long as it meant the devotion, body and soul, of the female to the male. Hence the woman must not develop her faculties in a way unpleasant to the man: that strength, courage, independence were not attractive in women; that rivalry in men's pursuits was positively unpleasant. Hence masculine strength and masculine ability in women must be firmly trampled on and boycotted by men. *Contrast* was the essence of the matrimonial relation: feminine weakness contrasted with masculine strength: masculine egotism with feminine self-devotion.

"If you compete with us we shan't marry you," he summed up with a laugh.

I maintained the opposite argument: that there was an ideal of character in which strength, courage, sympathy, self-devotion, persistent purpose were united to a clear and far-seeing intellect; that the ideal was common to the man and to the woman; that these qualities might manifest themselves in different ways in the man's and the woman's life; that what you needed was not different qualities and different defects, but the same virtues working in different directions, and dedicated to the service of the community in different ways.

At lunch at his house our discussion was more practical. He said that he had heard that I was about to undertake a history of Co-operation.

"Do you think I am equal to it?" I asked.

"Now, Miss Potter, I am going to be perfectly frank: of course I think you are equal to a history of Co-operation: but it is not what you can do best. There is one thing that *you* and only you can do—an enquiry into the unknown field of female labour. You have, unlike most women, a fairly trained intellect, and the courage and capacity for original work; and you have a woman's insight into a woman's life. There is no man in England who could undertake with any prospect of success an enquiry into female labour. There are any number of men who could write a history of Co-operation, and would bring to this study of a purely economic question far greater strength and knowledge than you possess. For instance, your views on the relative amount of profit in the different trades, and the reason of the

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

success of Co-operation in cotton and its failure in the woollen industry might interest me; but I should read what you said with grave doubt as to whether you had really probed the matter. On the other hand, if you described the factors enabling combinations of women in one trade and destroying all chance of it in the other, I should take what you said as the opinion of the best authority on the subject. I should think to myself, well, if Miss Potter has not succeeded in sifting these facts no one else will do so, so I may as well take her conclusion as the final one. To sum up with perfect frankness: if you devote yourself to the study of your own sex as an industrial factor, your name will be a household word two hundred years hence: if you write a history of Co-operation it will be superseded and ignored in a year or two. In the one case you will be using unique qualities which no one else possesses, and in the other you will be using faculties which are common to most men, and given to a great many among them in a much higher degree. *A book by you on the Co-operative Movement I may get my wife to read to me in the evening to while away the time, but I shan't pay any attention to it,*" he added with shrill emphasis.<sup>1</sup>

Of course I disputed the point, and tried to make him realise that I wanted this study in industrial administration as an education for economic science. The little professor, with bright eyes, shrugged his shoulders and became satirical on the subject of a woman dealing with scientific generalisations: not unkindly satirical, but chaffingly so. He stuck to his point and heaped on flattery to compensate for depreciation.

"Here you are a beginner—a one-year-old in economic study, and yet you have outstripped men like myself and Foxwell (who have devoted all the years of our life to economic questions) on

<sup>1</sup> I confess to a certain *Schadenfreude* in reading the following extract from an obituary appreciation of Professor Marshall by Professor C. R. Fay, a favourite pupil, now the well-known economist and writer on Co-operation, as proving that, ten years after publication, my little book still interested him!

"Gradually I arrived at my subject—Co-operation," recalls Professor Fay. "I was under a bond with him to write down, on a separate page in my notebook, the proposed title, altering it each week till it fitted my ambition. At last it became 'Co-operation at Home and Abroad, an analysis and description.' *His only fear was that I should be over-influenced by a pernicious book written by Beatrice Potter on this subject.*" (*The Canadian Forum*, p. 147, 1925.)

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

the *one* subject of woman's labour. You have made a great success because you have a talent for a special kind of investigation. And yet you insist on ignoring your own talent and taking to work for which, pardon my absolute frankness, you have no more ability than the ordinary undergraduate who comes to my class. Naturally enough I feel strongly about it. I stand to you in the relation of a consumer to the producer. I am, in fact, one of your principal customers; and yet, though I am willing to lavish gratitude on you if you will only produce what I want, you insist on trying to produce what you cannot make successfully, and when you have made it will be practically useless."

I confess, after all this contempt sugared over with an absurdly kind appreciation of my talent for one particular type of investigation, I was relieved to find that in his forthcoming work on political economy the dear little professor had quoted my generalisation about the division of labour being characteristic neither of the best nor of the worst type of production, but of the medium kind. That generalisation, at any rate, is a purely intellectual one, unconnected with the special insight of a woman into the woman's life.

I came away liking the man, and with gratitude for the kindly way in which he had stated his view; refreshed by his appreciation, and inclined to agree with him as to the slightness of my strength and ability for the work I proposed to undertake. Still, with the disagreeable, masculine characteristic of persistent and well-defined purpose, I shall stick to my own way of climbing my own little tree. Female labour I may take up some day or other, but the Co-operative Movement comes first. [MS. diary, March 8, 1889.]

### A FALSE STEP

What finally determined me to select as my next field of enquiry the Co-operative Movement was the very fact that I suspect lay at the bottom of Professor Marshall's high opinion of my unique qualifications for the alternative question of woman's labour, namely, that I was at that time known to be an anti-feminist. In the spring of 1889 I took what afterwards seemed to me a false step in joining with others in signing the then notorious manifesto, drafted by Mrs. Humphry Ward and some other distinguished ladies,

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

against the political enfranchisement of women, thereby arousing the hostility of ardent women brain-workers, and, in the eyes of the general public, undermining my reputation as an impartial investigator of women's questions. When pressed by Frederic Harrison and James Knowles to write a reasoned answer to Mrs. Fawcett's indignant retort to this reactionary document, I realised my mistake. Though I delayed my public recantation for nearly twenty years, I immediately and resolutely withdrew from that particular controversy.<sup>1</sup> Why I was at that time an anti-feminist in feeling is easy to explain, though impossible

<sup>1</sup> The anti-suffrage "appeal" was published in the *Nineteenth Century* for June 1889, and the replies mentioned in the following letter from Frederic Harrison appear in the same Review for July 1889:

"The papers of Mrs. Fawcett and of Mrs. Ashton Dilke, though the latter is far better in tone, are manifestly beneath the dignity and force of the Appeal (Frederic Harrison writes to me on July 7, 1889). Mr. Knowles [the Editor of the *Nineteenth Century*] and I are cordially agreed in this, that you are the woman most fitted, on every ground most fitted, to take up the task, and as I have been active in urging your name as the champion, he has begged me to try and induce you to undertake it. There is needed something more full, more sympathetic and more definite than the Appeal. I really think it is a duty you owe to the public. It is criminal to bury your talent in a napkin in Monmouthshire. I do most earnestly implore you as a social obligation to speak out what you think and to make it a reply in fact, if not in form, to the dry democratic formulas of Mrs. Fawcett."

The following entry in the MS. diary probably expresses the tenor of my refusal to comply with this request:

"At present I am anxious to keep out of the controversy. I have as yet accomplished no work which gives me a right to speak as representative of the class Mrs. Fawcett would enfranchise: celibate women. And to be frank, I am not sure of my ground; I am not certain whether the strong prejudice I have against political life and political methods does not influence my judgement on the question of enfranchising women." [MS. diary, July 7, 1889.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

to justify. Conservative by temperament, and anti-democratic through social environment, I had reacted against my father's overvaluation of women relatively to men; and the narrow outlook and exasperated tone of some of the pioneers of woman's suffrage had intensified this reaction. I remember at a luncheon given by an American lady to American suffragists (who had not given me a cigarette to soothe my distaste for the perpetual reiteration of the rights of women) venting this irritation by declaring provocatively—"I have never met a man, however inferior, whom I do not consider to be my superior!" My dislike of the current Parliamentary politics of the Tory and Whig "ins" and "outs" seemed a sort of argument against the immersion of women in this atmosphere. But at the root of my anti-feminism lay the fact that I had never myself suffered the disabilities assumed to arise from my sex. Quite the contrary; if I had been a man, self-respect, family pressure and the public opinion of my class would have pushed me into a money-making profession; as a mere woman I could carve out a career of disinterested research. Moreover, in the craft I had chosen a woman was privileged. As an investigator she aroused less suspicion than a man, and, through making the proceedings more agreeable to the persons concerned, she gained better information. Further, in those days, a competent female writer on economic questions had, to an enterprising editor, actually a scarcity value. Thus she secured immediate publication and, to judge by my own experience, was paid a higher rate than that obtained by male competitors of equal standing.

## THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

I was already sufficiently versed in the technique of in-

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

vestigation to realise that it would be useless, and indeed impertinent, to interview the directors and officials, employees and members of the Co-operative Movement, without first preparing my own mind. From my friend Benjamin Jones, the General Manager of the London Branch of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, I borrowed a collection of Congress Reports, 1869–1888, and twenty years' files of the leading co-operative journal; and during the following year (1889) I used the months spent with my father to work steadily through this arid mass of print—an irksome task—rendered still more tedious by the lack of any proper system of note-taking.<sup>1</sup> How well I remember the mental weariness, and even physical nausea, with which, after some hours' toil, I would turn over yet another page of the small and faint letterpress of these interminable volumes!

Just ten days reading at co-operative periodicals [I record midway in one of these spells of reading]. Tiresome work: with apparently little result, except a gathering of disjointed facts, none of which I can at present verify. It is peculiarly tiresome because I have no clear idea of the exact facts I am searching for; no settled plan of the scope of my work. Two conclusions I have reached: (1) that the Co-operative Movement means an association of working men to secure a large share of the profits from the middleman, the trader and the manufacturer, but that it fails entirely to check the fall of prices, and consequently of wages brought about by competition for the custom of the consumer; (2) that the notion that the present Co-operative Movement arose out of the sentimental propaganda of gentlemen idealists is not true: it grew upon the basis of self-interest, and the idealism was grafted on to it. I am still in doubt as to whether this idealism has done much good? The one use of the "gentlemen" connected with the movement has been promoting legislation to legalise co-operative societies. Also, profit-

<sup>1</sup> The industrious apprentice will find in the Appendix (C) a short memorandum on the method of analytic note-taking, which we have found most convenient in the use of documents and contemporaneous literature, as well as in the recording of interviews and personal observations.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

sharing was not considered a *sine qua non* in the earlier phases of the successful movement begun by the Rochdale Pioneers. [MS. diary, June 29, 1889.]

Struggling with the *Co-op. News* and enduring all the miseries of want of training in methods of work [I write some weeks later]. Midway I discover that my notes are slovenly, and under wrong headings, and I have to go through some ten weeks' work again ! Up at 6.30 and working 5 hours a day, sometimes 6. Weary but not discouraged. [MS. diary, July 26, 1889.]

A grind, and no mistake ! Six hours a day reading and note-taking from those endless volumes of the *Co-operative News*. A treadmill of disjointed facts, in themselves utterly uninteresting and appallingly dry, and not complete enough to be satisfactory. And there is the perpetual exercise of judgement—Is it worth while reading this paper or that speech ? the unsatisfactoriness of the decision either way. If one does *not* read on, the fear that one has missed a suggestion or a fact of importance ; if one persists with aching eyes, the dreary sense of time and effort wasted, if the material turns out to be useless theorising, dreamy idealism, or ill-considered and patently inaccurate description. A grim determination to finish with it makes me sit at the work longer than is good for body or mind. So I feel sick and irritable, and in my off times I am desperately cross. However, it is satisfactory to feel that one will never be beaten for lack of industry. . . . "Genius is given by God ; but talent can be attained by any straightforward intellect bent on doing its best." So says Flaubert, and I console myself in my despondent hours with the thought that talent for excellent work may be mine. . . . [MS. diary, August 20, 1889.]

This arduous and continuous acquisition of peculiarly indigestible material proved worth while. Not that I gained from these accounts and reports of innumerable societies, from the papers and discussions at conferences and congresses, from reminiscences of aged Owenites, from the bitter controversies raging round about the co-operative faith between the group of distinguished Christian Socialists on the one hand and the working-class officials and committee-men on the other, any explanation of the successes and failures of the Movement. What I secured

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

was a "bunch of keys": ~~key events, key societies, key~~ technical terms and key personalities, by the use of which I could gain the confidence of the persons I interviewed, unlock the hidden stores of experience in their minds, and secure opportunities for actually observing and recording the working constitution and divers activities of the different types of organisation within the Co-operative Movement.

Meanwhile, whenever I was free from attendance on my father, I wandered through the Midlands, the Northern Counties of England and the Lowlands of Scotland, attending sectional conferences and members' meetings, and settling down for days or weeks at such centres as Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow and Manchester, in order to interview every type of co-operator. In my current diary I note visits to the stores of large towns and of small, as well as to practically all the "self-governing workshops" and hybrid co-partnerships then known as co-operative productive societies. A few sample entries from the pages of my diary for the spring and summer of 1889 will enable the student to follow the course and manner of these adventures. Let me say, in passing, that the investigator should make a point of recording "first impressions" of scenes, events and personages. These first impressions correspond with the hasty snapshots of the Kodak: they are proof that some such event happened, but they are seldom portraits, and frequently caricatures; they must never be taken as considered and verified statements of fact. The value of these rapid sketches is that they may afford clues to puzzle-questions—hypotheses that can be subsequently disproved or verified—unexpected glimpses of the behaviour of men under particular circumstances, when they are unaware of being observed; and as such they are a useful supplement

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

to the mechanical and dry<sup>est</sup> record of sociological detail contained in analytic notes and statistical tables. For obvious reasons I disguise the identity of some of the persons whom I describe, or whose words are quoted.

Three days at Hebden Bridge staying with the widow of an ironfounder. [I had come to Hebden Bridge to attend a conference summoned by the Hebden Bridge Fustian Society, at that time the most successful of the co-operative productive societies, but afterwards absorbed in the Co-operative Wholesale Society.] Three daughters and a son of twenty. Lower middle class just risen out of the working class. Mother a shrewd, warm-hearted body: true Yorkshire straightforwardness and cordiality. Daughters "genteel" but pleasant girls. One does the housekeeping and is paid for it; another is the accountant of the family business, and the third is an assistant schoolmistress; whilst the son works at the business. They all talk broad Yorkshire. They have few sympathies or interests outside the life of gentility except the working-class mother, who is a vigorous politician of the Gladstonian type. But though their interests are not public, the family life is charming, and they are good friends with every one. Indeed, Hebden Bridge resembles Bacup in its fusion of the middle and working class. Upper class it has none. My interest was in the vigorous co-operative life of the place; I saw many co-operators and attended their meetings. Young Oxford men are down here; and they and the co-operators form a mutual admiration society between intellectual young Oxford and co-operative working class. Co-operative working man: common condemnation of the capitalist class and money-making brain-workers: a condemnation the form of which bordered perilously on cant, and was clearly the outcome of ignorance.

Back to Manchester by afternoon train. [MS. diary, March 21, 1889.]

Mitchell,<sup>1</sup> chairman of the C.W.S., is one of the leading person-

<sup>1</sup> J. T. W. Mitchell (1828-95), the most remarkable personality that the British Co-operative Movement has thrown up, was the illegitimate son of "a man in good position, but of un-governed character." Mitchell himself, so we are told by his biographer (*John T. W. Mitchell*, by Percy Redfern, p. 12), "felt that he owed small moral benefit to this side of his parentage." The mother "lived only for the boy"; and, "although hard

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

alities in the Co-operative Movement . . . he is an enthusiast for the consumers' interests; a sort of embodiment of the working-man customer, intent on getting the whole profit of production, out of the hands of the manufacturer and trader, for the consumer. . . . As the representative of the Wholesale he is inspired by one idea—the enlargement and increased power of the organisation of which he is the head. He supports himself on the part proceeds of a small woollen business, and draws perhaps 30s. a week from the Wholesale to which he devotes his whole energies. With few wants (for he is an old bachelor)

pressed, she would not allow her child from her side.” Apparently she gained her livelihood by keeping a tiny beerhouse in a working-class street, supplemented by letting lodgings to working men. From ten years old, when Mitchell began as a piecer in a cotton mill, he earned his livelihood in the textile industry, until he retired at the age of about forty-five without means, to devote his whole energies to the development of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, of which he was re-elected chairman, quarter by quarter, for twenty-one years, 1874–95. Throughout these twenty-one years of complete absorption in building up the most varied if not the largest business enterprise in the world at that time, Mitchell lived on the minute fees, never exceeding £150 a year, that this vast enterprise then allowed to its chairman, in a small lodging at Rochdale, his total estate on death amounting to the magnificent sum of £350 17s. 8d. He never married, and was romantically attached to his mother. Soon after her death in 1874 he compassionately took to live with him a neighbour—Thomas Butterworth—who had been imprisoned for theft and found it impossible to get employment, and who became first his devoted servant, and, inheriting small house property, his devoted landlord and habitual companion till death parted them. Throughout this long, altruistic business career Mitchell remained an ardent advocate of temperance and an assiduous teacher of the Sunday School at the Rochdale Chapel, to which he made a point of returning, Sunday after Sunday, from the longest business journeys, even if this involved travelling (third class) all night. In his Presidential Address to the Rochdale Congress, 1892, he summed up his faith: “The three great forces for the improvement of mankind are religion, temperance, and co-operation; and as a commercial force, supported and sustained by the other two, co-operation is the grandest, noblest, and most likely to be successful in the redemption of the industrial classes” (p. 89 of *John T. W. Mitchell*, 1923, by Percy Redfern).

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

he lives in a small lodging, eats copiously of heavy food and drinks freely of tea: no spirits and no tobacco. Corpulent, with a slow, bumptious pronunciation of long phrases, melting now and again into a boyish bonhomie. . . . He is a good fellow, and in his inflated way a patriotic citizen, according to his own ideal, the consumers' welfare. His Board of Directors are entirely subordinate to him: they are corpulent, heavy eaters, but for the most part they are neither more nor less than simple tradesmen. They strike one as an honest set of men, above corruption and proud of their position as directors of the central organisation of working-class capitalists.

Three or four times I have dined with the Central Board. A higgledy-piggledy dinner; good materials served up coarsely, and shovelled down by the partakers in a way that is not appetising. But during dinner I get a lot of stray information, mostly through chaff and rapid discussion. Occasionally I am chaffed in a not agreeable way about matrimony and husbands, and the propriety of a match between me and Mitchell. But it is all good-natured, and I take it kindly. After dinner, in spite of the Chairman's disapproval, we smoke cigarettes, and our conversation becomes more that of business camaraderie.

If the Central Board of the Wholesale supplies me with food, the Central Board of the Co-operative Union supplies me with office room. I shall describe hereafter the different functions of these two organisations. But in this daily record I wish to outline personalities. Gray<sup>1</sup> is working secretary of the Co-

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Gray (1854-1912) was the son of a Baptist Minister at Hebden Bridge, and was trained as a clerk in the Audit Office of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Co. Owing to his co-operative sympathies and work, he was made General Secretary of the Hebden Bridge Fustian Society in 1874; Assistant Secretary to the Central Board of the Co-operative Union in 1883; becoming, on the death of E. Vansittart Neale, General Secretary of the Co-operative Union in 1891, a post he retained until disabled by ill-health in 1910. His sympathies were from the first with associations of producers rather than with the Consumers' Co-operative Movement; and in 1886, at the Plymouth Congress, he read an able paper on Co-operative Production, outlining a scheme for the formation of self-governing productive societies linked up with the Co-operative Wholesale Society. The scheme was unanimously adopted by the Plymouth Congress, the Directors of the Co-operative Wholesale Society remaining silent. But here the matter ended. In after years, in order to prevent

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

operative Union (Neale<sup>1</sup> is too old to be a living force). He is a nice young man: that is the first impression: scrupulously turned out in co-operative cloth made by a co-operative tailor. He is an idealist: looking at co-operation not as a huge organised consumers' interest, but as a true and equitable co-operation between capital and labour. He is not a self-seeker; he is a

the obstinate evil of overlapping between the various separate consumers' societies, then become thick on the ground, he sketched out a striking proposal for their amalgamation into a single national society with local branches, as to which see *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement*, 1921, by S. and B. Webb, pp. 307-9.

<sup>1</sup> E. Vansittart Neale (1810-1892) a grandson of Mr. Vansittart of Bisham Abbey, M.P. for Berkshire during Pitt's Administration and a lineal descendant of Oliver Cromwell, was educated at Rugby and Oriel College, Oxford; practised as Chancery barrister, and was, in 1849, one of the founders of the Society for promoting Working Men's Associations. I believe that in all the annals of British philanthropy no more honourable example can be found of a life devoted from first to last to the disinterested and self-denying service of the wage-earning class. Possessed of considerable means, he lavished money on the associations of producers started by the Christian Socialists and their successors, until in 1855, owing to the repeated failures of the enterprises, he had become a comparatively poor man. From 1869 onward he organised the Annual Co-operative Congress, becoming the unpaid General Secretary of the Co-operative Union from 1873 to 1891. His greatest service to the Co-operative Movement was acting as its legal adviser, drafting not only all its rules and reports but also practically all the legislation concerned with this form of industrial association. In the last year of his life he recognised and deplored the permeation of the Co-operative Movement by Fabian economics. "There seems" (he wrote to Hughes in 1892) "to be a growing disposition to seek the solution of social questions through municipal action, imbued with wholesale production for the sole benefit of the consumer, rather than through the growth and federation of true co-operative societies which will benefit the consumer by raising up his position as a worker. If this conception is to be served, I think we must oppose to this consumers' flood such strength as can be got out of union for the express promotion of co-operative production, with the ultimate hope of getting the consumers' societies to see that the spheres of production and consumption,

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

refined and modest-natured man, though, in his inmost soul, he has flights of ambition towards a seat in the County Council or perhaps even in Parliament. He lacks the energetic push of Mitchell, and his weary expression seems to betoken that he feels he is fighting a lost cause. In spare moments at the office he and I have many a cigarette together, and talks on philosophy, religion and politics as well as co-operation. [MS. diary, March 28, 1889.]

Here is a typical day among co-operators [I note a few days later]. Dined at one o'clock with the buyers at the Wholesale. Head of our table, manager of drapery department: strong able man, straightforward and business-like; to my right, Odgers, Secretary of Co-operative Insurance Company; to my left, Head of Boot and Shoe Department; in front, A. B., Chairman of the X and Y Co-operative Society, and C., cashier to the same society. Odgers is a positivist, an enthusiast who gave up a salary of £200 a year to become a co-operative employee at £1 a week, inspired by J. S. Mill's chapter on Co-operation. He is without humour, and without push or striking ability. But he is one of those men who make the backbone of great movements through steadfastness and integrity of character. "Where shall we find the moral impulse wherewith to inspire the Co-operative Movement? profit-sharing is played out" is his constant meditation. The conversation at dinner naturally turned on profit-sharing. Pearson and the other Wholesale employees were dead against it. It had been tried at the Wholesale, and it was found impossible to work out equitably. A. B., a large, fair-haired man who has recently taken a considerable place in the Movement through his pleasant manner, gift of the gab, and imposing presence (somewhat of a sham), talked in favour of some ideal form of profit-sharing which he could not define or explain, but which would be free of all the shortcomings of other forms. Odgers maintained that each man should have a fair wage (what is a fair wage?), and that profit was a selfish thing and a taste for it not to be cultivated. Then came coffee and cigarettes, and the conversation broadened out into the discussion of man's

though they should be closely allied, must be kept distinct, if the permanent welfare of the working population is to be secured by co-operation" (*Memorial of Edward Vansittart Neale*, compiled by Henry Pitman, 1894, p. 9). After his death, without any recognition by the public of his prolonged social service, a memorial tablet was placed in St. Paul's Cathedral at the expense of the Co-operative Movement.

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

general nature and the character of his motives; and then narrowed down into an interesting description of the difficulties experienced by the Wholesale at their Leicester works, with the Boot and Shoe Trade Union. "If you can get at the officials of the Unions they are sensible enough; but the men themselves are simply childish, and they frequently refuse to follow the advice of their own officials." Eccles Manufacturing Society was mentioned as one successful instance of profit-sharing.

At five o'clock set out for Burnley to attend meeting of shareholders of the Self-Help.<sup>1</sup> This is one of the six weaving sheds belonging to the workers themselves, who are responsible for profit, loss and management. Each weaver must take shares to cover cost of looms and room, and other workers in proportion. They hire their room and power, and frequently their machinery. Two of these societies have already come to grief; the one I visited has been in low water; the workers paying sixpence per loom back out of their wages to cover losses. The manager walked from the station with me. Big, burly man; neither he nor the secretary looked up to the mark of other managers and secretaries; and though that was only the third quarter they were the second instalment of managerial brains in its concern. He was full of complaint against those who were both his masters and his workers. It was impossible to keep discipline amongst them. They wanted first-class yarn to work and then expected him to compete in the market with masters who were making up yarn at half the price. They insisted on full Trade Union prices, whereas small masters were paying  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. less.

<sup>1</sup> For an account of this society from 1886 to 1892 see *Co-operative Production*, by Benjamin Jones, vol. i. pp. 315-22. Further details will be found in a more laudatory article by Thomas Blandford in *Labour Co-partnership* for December 1894; see also *New Statesman* Supplement on Co-operative Production and Profit-sharing, February 14, 1914, p. 21. The society still (1925) exists; but how far it has continued to stand on its original basis that all workers should be shareholders and all shareholders workers in the Society's mill is not clear to me. In 1914 I see it noted that the whole enterprise had been leased to the manager for ten years. In 1924 it was reported to have 289 members (shareholders) with a share capital of £12,034, making sales during the year of £30,008, and a profit of £1,053, after paying "salaries and wages" of £1,029 to six "employees." How many of the 289 "members" are employed as weavers in the mill is not stated.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

"They wants an aisy place; just to look at the machine and never so much as tie a bit o' yarn; they wants list prices and a bit over, and a couple of hours more holiday in the week into the bargain. And then they cries and grumbles if there is no divi. at the end of the quarter. The like of these places will never stand until they trust a man and not heckle him out of his life with one thing or another!"

The meeting was dramatic. A long, low warehouse, wooden, banded with iron, with here and there a wheel or belt peering through the ceiling from the upper chamber filled with machinery. Long wooden tables down the centre, upon which and upon the floor were heaps of printers' cloth ready for packing, whilst scattered about were tin twist-holders. When I entered with one of the directors these tins were being collected to serve as seats. The chairman, one of the weavers, a thin, weak individual, was poring hopelessly over the rules and regulations of the society. Men, and women with shawls thrown over their heads, were groping their way and squatting down one after the other as near as possible to the president's chair; and four jets of gas lit up the central position of the chair, and behind us the long, high wooden table, all the rest of the room being in darkness. The secretary was reclining on a heap of material; the directors were some of them lying at full length on the table, peering over the minute book, at which the secretary was gazing indifferently. To the right of the chairman some of the elder men were seated. To the left a band of youths were bent on obstruction and rebellion. There was a loud muttering amongst these youths and men, but the women shareholders were gossiping and laughing. Bits of paper were pinned up on the beams supporting the wall with the agenda of the meeting scribbled on them.

Minutes of the last meeting read; obstruction of weak but noisy youth on some point of order which neither he nor the poor worried chairman understood. Then the question of the committee's fees. This was received in silence and hastily dropped by the chairman.

Next a personal explanation from a resigning director. This man was a slow but respectable person; his long, rambling speech, frequently obstructed by the small knot of boy shareholders, consisted of a complaint against the want of loyalty among the directors to each other. Everything said in committee, and many things not said, were repeated by one or more of the directors to the general body of shareholding workers.

"I might say this," ended up the injured man, "there is not one of your committee as never opens 'is mouth; but no sooner

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

'as 'e left the committee-room than 'e begins to ferment bad feeling. I will just give you, gentlemen and ladies, an instance. We 'ad our committee night and discussion as to lowering wages : it was adjourned as we could not agree. But before noon next day 'alf the hands in the shop came to me and insulted me because they said I wanted to lower wages, when I know who put them up to it, too."

"Mr. Chairman, I think 'e's out of order," shrieked an evil-looking youth.

"You needn't 'ave put the cap on if it didn't fit," growled the director. "Next question," shouted out the mass of the members, not inclined to take one side or the other.

"Election of new directors," drawled the secretary, and then proceeded to deal out slips of paper. The names of the candidates were written upon the agenda paper, but no one could see it, and general confusion resulted. At length after a passing to and fro of persons, an unpinning of the paper in one place and pinning it up in another, the hundred or so members present were supposed to have mastered the names. Voting was by ballot: each member writing down the name of his candidate and throwing it into the teller's hat.

"Now for the stocktakers," cried the chairman. "Now, gentlemen and ladies, you will have to look to the front of you in this. We must get a man who is a practical man and knows the business straight through. Will any one move and second any gentleman as he thinks fit?"

"John Ashworth"; "seconded." "I decline to stand: I did it last time, to the best of my ability, and you weren't satisfied. You can find another man this time."

"John Ardley"; "seconded." "My son won't stand," said a quiet old man; "he doesn't know the business." The son looked sheepish. He wanted the post and had put up two companions to propose and second him; but he dare not dispute his father's view of his capacity.

"I propose," says the evil-looking youth who is standing for the directorate, "that there be three stocktakers, and not two."

The chairman looks helpless; they have not got one yet, and he cannot quite see how having to get three will make it easier. But he accepts the suggestion and asks for three nominees. Some one who is not present is nominated, seconded and carried. The chairman accepts another for the second position. But the third? The secretary whispers to the chairman that the motion for a third was not seconded. "Aye," says the chairman with a sigh

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

of relief. "Gentlemen, the motion for the third stocktaker was not seconded, so it falls to the ground."

And now the real business of the evening. A suggestion from a leading member that they should make up better stuff and reduce the cost by lowering wages. Why should they attend to the Trade Union regulation: they were so many small masters each working for himself, and they could work for what wage they pleased, and so on. Then followed a rambling discussion, led off the point on to all sorts of general principles and details. A knock at the outer door startled the meeting. Was it the Trade Union official come to see what they were up to? No, it was, alas! my cab, come to fetch me to catch the last train to Manchester. As I drive rapidly down the steep streets of Burnley I meditate on the mingled ignorance, suspicion and fine aspirations of this small body of working-class capitalists doomed to failure. [MS. diary, April 1889.]

Two months later I am attending the Annual Co-operative Congress; my second congress, as I had been at the Dewsbury Congress, Whitsun 1888. In those early days of the Co-operative Movement these gatherings were more informal, more intimate, and also more amateur and quarrelsome, than the expert, self-respectful and politically important Co-operative Congress of to-day. Judging by the length of the entry in my diary, the Congress at Ipswich in June 1889 seems to have been a happy hunting-ground for the social investigator. Here is a portion of my rapid presentation of the personalities of this congress:

Whirled down to Ipswich in a crowded excursion train. Arrived at the White Horse Inn with Burnett, and Fielding, Manager of the Tea Department. At the door my old friends of the Wholesale, including Mitchell, welcomed me warmly. In the commercial room I find other co-operators; an American professor and his wife. The next four days a strange procession of men of all grades and conditions, the majority belonging to the working and lower middle class, but sprinkled with upper-class enquirers and sympathisers,—a politician, two Toynbee young men, an Irish peer's son who has started a store on his father's estate, the unassuming wives of the more distinguished working men, and a few exceptional women, glorified spinsters

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

like myself. A rapid and somewhat un consequential presentation of economic, social and political theories, of industrial, financial and economic facts, takes place in these conversations. Forty of us are installed in the romantic "Pickwick" Inn, with its rambling passages and covered courtyard; and here other leading co-operators congregate, drink whisky and smoke tobacco. At the Co-operative Congress there is an absolute equality: all live together on the freest of terms; excursions and business are conducted under the democratic co-operative system. . . .

It is Sunday evening and we are all assembled in the long coffee room—scattered up and down in knots round a long table, some devouring cold beef and tea, others chatting together. In one of these parties, behold the hero of this year's Congress: the distinguished man whom working-men co-operators have elected to give the inaugural address, Professor Marshall of Cambridge. He looks every inch a professor. A small slight man with bushy moustache and long hair, nervous movements, sensitive and unhealthily pallid complexion, and preternaturally keen and apprehending eyes, the professor has the youthfulness of physical delicacy. In spite of the intellectuality of his face, he seems to lack the human experience of everyday life. . . . To-night, however, his desire to gain information outweighs his nervous fear of a sleepless night, and he is listening with mingled interest and impatience to the modicum of facts dealt out in the inflated and involved phrases of Mitchell, the Chairman of the Manchester Wholesale. As I approach I am greeted by my old friend.

"Now, Miss Potter, come and join me in a cup of tea. I was just telling the Professor my view of the true nature and real use of the great Co-operative Movement. What we want to do is to make the purchasing power of a man's wage, whether received from us or from other employers—and mind you" (continues Mitchell, tapping me confidentially on the arm and lowering his voice), "at present—I do not say what may happen in the future—at present the men we employ is a mere handful to those employed by private firms—well, what I was saying was" (raising his voice so that all might hear) "that our great object was to increase the purchasing power of all men's wages by returning the profits of trading and manufacturing into the consumers' pocket. Now look you here; some people who don't understand say we are not just to Labour. But I will take an actual case. We have made a profit of £50,000 on our productive works. Now who should that profit go to? To the thousand working men and working women who are already paid fair wages, and

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

many of whom spend these very wages at private shops, or to the million working men and women who belong to our Movement and who have given the capital and paid for the brains which have made these manufactures grow up around us? It seems to me," concluded Mitchell, raising his sonorous voice and thundering on the table with his fat fist, "it seems to me, and I am moreover prepared to maintain it on religious, social and political grounds, that the Wholesale's method of organising production, combining as it does economy of capital, efficiency of administration and regularity of demand, is the best possible system of co-operation for the working man: and that if it is loyally supported and indefinitely extended it will solve all social problems, destroy poverty, eradicate crime and secure the greatest happiness to the greatest number."

Mitchell having delivered himself of his usual tea-party peroration and finding no one to dispute his points (the Professor was busily engaged on the £50,000 profit, combining that statement with some other fact he had heard, and calculating from the two some result withheld from him), relapsed into the enjoyment of highly sugared tea and much-buttered toast; his huge corpulent form, shiny bald head, clean-shaven face, exhibiting a full, good-tempered mouth, largely developed jaw and determined chin, so completely affirmed the force of his argument in favour of organised consumption, that it seemed useless to draw from him further verbal expressions of it. A tall, slim and hungry-looking youth, a delegate from some small but independent productive society, appeared on the point of disputing it, but doubtless remembering that the Wholesale was their best customer, thought better of his intention.

I turned to the group on the other side, including Benjamin Jones, astride a chair, Burnett leaning back with stately dignity, and Dent with his head half buried between his brawny arms and large, powerfully made, workman's hands.<sup>1</sup> Dent and Jones

<sup>1</sup> These three men, John Burnett, Benjamin Jones and J. J. Dent, had acted as my sponsors in the World of Labour, and here is an entry descriptive of two of them:

"Seen something during my London stay of Burnett, Benjamin Jones and J. J. Dent, the three most intimate of my working-men friends. My friendship with the two former is becoming a close one and likely to endure, as future work will bring us together. For Burnett I have a strong admiration; he is singularly disinterested, with a reserve of thought and feeling and a dignity of manner which make him attractive. Jones is on a

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

were disputing vigorously; Burnett was listening with the weighty responsible silence of a Government official. These three men are typical and representative of the three great working-class movements; Jones of associations for trading purposes, Burnett of Trade Unions, and Dent of workmen's clubs and of the self-governing workshop side of co-operation. Benjamin Jones is a combination of a high-minded grocer, a public-spirited administrator and a wire-puller. Within the Co-operative Movement he is all three. Burnett has the dignity of a skilled mechanic; the self-restraint of a great organiser; the massive power of a leader of great strikes based on broad claims. Dent<sup>1</sup> is a much younger man, clear-headed and sympathetic, but an enthusiast for abstract theories and perfect justice, still feeling his way as to the best method of social reform. At present his square forehead is contracted with thought, and in his dark grey eyes there is an expression of worried perplexity.

"Now look you here, Dent," says Ben Jones in his confident cheery manner; "I am simply going to state facts on Wednesday [Ben Jones is President of that day]. I am going to give the older

lower plane; but he, also, is an enthusiast for the service of humanity; a pushing, fighting soldier in the great army, ready to sacrifice himself personally, but thinking any means good enough to fight the enemy; tolerating all things true and false, good or evil, so long as they seem to work in his direction. He strives night and day in order that mankind should enjoy the 'results of goodness,' but forgets that the fruit cannot exist without the tree. An enlightened selfishness in men and women cannot bring about the peace of an unconscious self-devotion to the public good." [MS. diary, March 6, 1889.]

<sup>1</sup> J. J. Dent, born 1856; a highly skilled bricklayer, who was in 1883 elected Secretary of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union (a post he resigned when appointed in 1893 as Co-operative Correspondent to the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, remaining a member of the Executive and Vice-President of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union until 1922), retired from the Government service in 1919, after being made C.M.G. for service on Emigrants' Information Office of Colonial Office. Throughout his life he has been closely connected with the Co-operative Movement, having already attended forty-one Annual Co-operative Congresses, and assisted in the formation of many societies. He has also been associated with the Workers' Educational Association and the Working Men's College, and other educational organisations.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

men their due; they have done for the working class with the joint stock companies<sup>1</sup> what we have failed to do with our attempt at profit-sharing; but it is no use making it into a shibboleth when it is simply one method of reaching our common aim. If you want to go to Japan you can go to the west or to the east; you can go ways that seem absolutely opposite, but eventually they meet. It is the same with these two methods of association; and all we can say is that the store method has arrived at better results than the so-called co-operative productive method."

"Well, if you are going to say that," replied Dent, "I don't see what is the good of praising up profit-sharing. If the East way is also the best way, we might as well give up the idea of the other."

"No, look you here! Profit-sharing *is* the best if we can work it out: it is better for the men employed. I am not going to deny that, else why should I be interested in the Co-operative Aid Society<sup>2</sup> and spend my time and money on that? What I want is that both systems should have fair play and no favour.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Jones was here referring to some eighty cotton-spinning and cotton-weaving factories in Lancashire, then known as "Working Class Limiteds." These cotton mills had been started and were being managed by working men, the original capital having been contributed either by the members of local co-operative stores, as in the case of the Rochdale Manufacturing Company started by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1854 (see note on p. 429), or by other groups of artisans. Some of these establishments began by sharing profits with the workers, but by 1886 they had all dropped this method of remuneration, and were, in constitution and activities, in no respect different from ordinary capitalist establishments, being governed, not by the representatives of the consumers or by the representatives of the workers concerned, but by the shareholders, with voting power according to the number of shares held. These limited liability companies, formed principally by men of the wage-earning class, and governed by boards of directors mainly drawn from the same class, were on this account often alluded to by economists and others as being "co-operative"; and, for historical reasons, they were, up to about 1890, regarded as part of the Co-operative Movement, though they were not at any time admitted to direct representation in the Co-operative Congress.

<sup>2</sup> The Co-operative Aid Society was an organisation for helping groups of working men to start self-governing workshops,

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

But if you go and put up the back of the Wholesale Board by this constant abuse you will just make them shut the door to the other principle, and then it will have no chance. Tom Hughes by his dogmatism and violence has thrown the whole question of profit-sharing back for at least ten years, and X. has absolutely stamped it out of the Wholesale organisation, merely because he would not let it grow up from a small beginning."

"I am not going to defend X. He is a schemer and has feathered his own nest with his fine theories. But Tom Hughes has lost money in the Movement, and you had better not have a hit at him in your address. The Southern Section look upon him as their leader. I confess I am glad he is not here. We do not want a split between the North and the South; X. is doing his best to start one."

"Not much chance of that while *we* hold the purse-strings," retorted the said Jones with a chuckle; "and after all we satisfy

and was in those days of muddled thinking mildly patronised by some of the leading officials of the C.W.S. Here is an entry relating to it, dated November 19, 1889:

"Attended Committee meeting of Co-operative Aid Association in Board Room of London C.W.S.; Dent in the chair.

"Deputations from productive societies or would-be societies. Ignorant but well-meaning young man, boot and leather examiner, who wished to start West-end boot factory. 'The hand-sewn trade,' he told us, 'is dying a natural death: every person takes machine-made boots because of their cheapness.' And yet it was in the hand-sewn trade that he wanted to start a society! After a lengthy dissertation on the foot being the most important member of the body, he produced a written statement of wages, cost of raw material, prices given by customers: a statement which showed the respectable profit of 30 per cent. The small matter of management was of course left unconsidered; the existence of a market was assumed.

"'To whom will you sell your boots?' asks one of the Committee with a puzzled expression.

"'Oh that's easy enough,' says the young man; 'the public will see the advantage of our manufacture: they will know that our principle is to do honest work; our wish to give satisfaction. I have not the slightest doubt of our success'; and then follows another muddled oration on co-operative ideals. At last the young man is dismissed with a letter to David Schloss, an expert on the boot trade. More deputations; and at 7.45 Vaughan Nash and I adjourned to Canito's for supper."



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

both parties. At Congress we pass resolutions in favour of profit-sharing, and during the year we ignore them."

"The danger of the Movement," interposed Burnett, "is that consumption is becoming so highly organised that these independent productive societies will have no chance."

"Yes," said Dent, "I do not feel much inclined to help the store movement. Every store that is started lessens the chance of Productive Co-operation with profits given to the producer. No sooner has the working-man touched his 'divi' and his one cry is more."

"He is much the same as other men," replies the matter-of-fact Jones. "The sooner we get out of our head that the co-operator is the most unselfish of men, the better. It is all cant and twaddle. The co-operator is not one whit less selfish than other men, only he goes about it in a more sensible manner and gets more return for his selfishness. If we cannot prove that by giving a share of profits to the worker we make him work better, we shall never convert even ten per cent. of co-operators to profit-sharing. Now what I want to do is to clear all this humbug out of the way; to look facts in the face and start fair. And here is Miss Potter, who is going to study the question and show us the way out of the difficulty. Come, Miss Potter, leave Mitchell to his tea, and come and help me to make Dent understand our view of the question."

"There is another question Miss Potter has to explain to us, one for which she is far more responsible"—Dent remarks in a grave tone but with a kindly light in his grey eyes—"why she lent her influence to that appeal against the suffrage. I believe it is just this: she is satisfied with her own position because she is rich and strong; she does not see that other women need the power to help themselves which would be given by the vote."

This I feel to be an unpleasant accusation, especially as Dent and I are old friends and he speaks seriously. But before I have time to advance any sober proposition or arguments the little Professor, in tones of nervous irritability, intervenes.

"Miss Potter sees what the women suffrage people do not see; that if women attempt to equal men and be independent of their guidance and control, the strong woman will be ignored and the weak woman simply starved. It is not likely that men will go on marrying if they are to have competitors for wives. Contrast is the only basis of marriage, and if that is destroyed we shall not think it worth our while to shackle ourselves in life with a companion whom we must support and must consider."

There are two sides to that question, think I, and the celibate

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

condition of the human race can be brought about by either party to the matrimonial contract. However, I laughingly reply:

"Mr. Marshall, I pity you deeply. You are obliged to come to the rescue of a woman who is the personification of emancipation in all ways; who clings to her cigarette if she does not clutch at her vote. Why don't you leave me to my fate? Convicted of hopeless inconsistency, I might even give up smoking hoping thereby to protect myself against my rights."

"That's just it," whispers Jones. "That's why these women are so bitter against you. It is pure perversity on your side to say one thing and act another."

"Surely, Mr. Jones, I am simply taking a hint from your admirable method of controlling the Co-operative Movement; signing resolutions in favour of one policy, and acting according to another."

"She's got you there, Jones." But the smile which played across Dent's face gives way to a perplexed expression as he adds, "I believe you are in earnest with your views; I should like some day to have it out with you; a clever, strong woman like you must have some reasons to give. I cannot say I think much of those in the protest. Will you come down into the court yard?" he adds. "Maxwell is there and some of the Scottish delegates: you might like to ask them some questions."

"I will go anywhere for a cigarette."

The company disappears; the Marshalls retire to their room, I to the smoking-room, where I spend the rest of a late evening in telling fortunes from hands, and in a stray search for facts in the chaff of a smoking-room conversation. . . .

On the whole the Ipswich Congress has been unsatisfactory to me personally. . . . The little clique of exceptional women, with their correct behaviour and political aspirations, give me most decidedly the cold shoulder—this in a company of men annoys me more than it should do. But the supreme discouragement of the Congress is the growing consciousness that I am unfit for the work I have undertaken, and that I am only at the beginning of my study of the Co-operative Movement. The little Professor frightens me by asking in sinister tones whether I have considered the effect of the appreciation of gold in the years 1871-74 on the productive societies then started! and tells me quite frankly that I have got the wrong end of the stick. Still, I got a good deal out of him in my long interview in his Cambridge study; and, though disheartened, I came away more than ever determined to grasp my subject firmly. [MS. diary, June 1889.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

When in the country with my father, I ponder over my study of co-operative theory and my observations of co-operative practice; and I see visions of a more equitable distribution of wealth and a higher standard alike of knowledge and brotherhood than had proved to be practicable in profit-making enterprise.

How inexpressibly ugly are the manners and ways of a typical middle-class man, brought up in the atmosphere of small profit-making; securing profit by "driving other chaps," a phrase which represents in H.-C.'s mind the great world of invention and enterprise; for the small manufacturing and retail tradesman's business is a matter of driving and "doing" workers and customers. Experience of this class makes me wonder whether profit is not on the whole a demoralising force? Whether a system of standard salaries and standard wages, such as is being gradually evolved by Trade Unionism and co-operative enterprise, is not a higher form of industrial organisation? Should not the use of a man's faculties after he has received his maintenance be dedicated to society? Is not profit-making the sharing of unlawful gain? And are not the forces of public opinion and the natural evolution of industry tending in that way?

Some such conclusion I am coming to in my study of the Co-operative Movement. It seems to me to have been essentially a movement *not* towards the sharing of profits by workers, but towards an unconscious realisation of the socialist ideal of officially managed business on the basis of voluntary association; the difference between the Co-operative Movement and mere joint stock association lying in the fact that the religious element of work for humanity has entered into it as a vivifying force. Moreover, embodied in its creed are the ethics of industry: purity of goods; equal payment and care for the workers. And yet I am slow to accept this theory as it is contrary to the whole idealism of the actual leaders [of the Co-operative Movement]. [MS. diary, October 1889.]

Now, I do not reproduce these diary entries as affording any vision of my investigation into the Co-operative Movement. They do but indicate the nature of the "contacts" that I made, in order to gain the necessary opportunities to

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

examine the extensive and somewhat amorphous piece of social tissue that I had undertaken to study. So as not to repeat the book that I eventually wrote, I confine the statement of my conclusions to the baldest summaries.

My first discovery had really some resemblance to that of the child in Hans Andersen's story, who looked at the king when all the courtiers were admiring his regal robes, and declared that the monarch was, in fact, naked ! The co-operators who, with the assent of their intellectual supporters and admirers, kept on asserting that the object of their movement was the abolition of the wage system and the organisation of industry in the interest of the manual working producers, had, in fact, by 1889, built up a great industrial organisation of a hierarchical character exclusively in the interest of working-class consumers. Far from abolishing the wage system, all they had done was to extend it to the brain-worker. What they had abolished was the profit-making *entrepreneur* ! In one sense, as I shall presently show, they had abolished profits. Yet at congress after congress the co-operators resolutely refused to witness the transfiguration of their own movement. All I did was to point out this transformation, whilst at the same time I explained and justified it.

Within the Co-operative Movement of the 'eighties there were two diametrically opposed schemes of industrial organisation: on the one hand, government by the producers of the commodities and services concerned, and on the other, government by the consumers thereof. Control by the workers was professed, control by the consumers was practised. My study of industrial history of the first half of the nineteenth century enabled me to trace how the practice of the co-operators had worked out differently from the idea with which they had started.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Let us first consider the origin of that "charmer" within "the order of thought" but "gay deceiver" within "the order of things," the idea of the "self-governing workshop."

What seemed clear, alike to the wage-earner himself and to the intellectuals concerned about the chronic penury and insecurity of the manual worker's lot in the midst of riches, was that all the misery had arisen from the divorce which the industrial revolution had brought about between the manual worker and the ownership, alike of the instruments of production and the product itself. Why, it was asked, should not this evil be undone, and the land given back to the peasant cultivator and the tools again placed in the hands of the craftsman and his apprentice?

Some such vision seems to have appeared to William Cobbett in the rare intervals when his mind passed from asserting political rights to considering the conditions of economic freedom. But any one born and bred in a manufacturing district, whether employer or employed, was aware that, under the circumstance of modern machine industry, with its large establishments and subdivision of labour, this act of restitution could not be made to the individual worker; it had necessarily to be made to all the workers in a particular workshop, factory or mine, for them in concert to carry on their industry. Hence the conception of the "self-governing workshop"—an ideal of surpassing attractiveness. To the workman it gave the feeling that he would be his own master; to the Conservative it seemed a reversion to the healthier conditions of a former time; to the Christian it seemed to substitute in industry the spirit of fellowship and mutual assistance for that of competitive selfishness. Even to the mid-Victorian orthodox political economist, with his apotheosis of pecuniary

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

self-interest and his unbending faith in the struggle for existence, the self-governing workshop seemed the only practicable way of extending to all those who were co-operating in production the blessed incentive of "profit on price," and thus broadening the basis and strengthening the defences of an acquisitive society.

Now it was this fascinating conception of the self-governing workshop that was wrapped round and round the Co-operative Movement when I first began studying it. To read the reports of the Annual Co-operative Congresses between 1869 and 1887, one would imagine that it was this conception of industrial self-government that was the universally accepted goal of those who professed the co-operative faith. All the lecturers and writers on co-operation, from the little group of talented Christian Socialists led by F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, J. M. Ludlow, Tom Hughes and Edward Vansittart Neale, to distinguished political economists—John Stuart Mill, John Elliot Cairnes and Alfred Marshall—held aloft, with more or less enthusiasm, the banner of self-employment by groups of working men, owning alike the instruments and the product of their labour, as the desirable, and the only practicable alternative to the dictatorship of the capitalist. Nor was this notion confined to middle-class intellectuals. Had not the short-lived revolutionary movement of 1833–34, embodied in the "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," proclaimed its intention of transforming each Trade Union into a national company, the agricultural union to take over the land, the miners the mines, the textile unions the factories? The Builders' Guild actually started on the erection of a Guildhall at Birmingham and was inviting orders for houses. This syndicalist Trade Unionism crashed to the ground within a few months of its initi-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

ation.<sup>1</sup> For another decade the pendulum swung in favour of political revolution. But in 1848 the collapse of the Chartist Movement led to a revival of the plan of self-employment. Under the inspiration of F. D. Maurice and the direction of J. M. Ludlow, a whole litter of little self-governing workshops were started within the Metropolitan area, to be followed a few years later by a larger experiment in self-employment by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.<sup>2</sup> From that time onward there appeared at Co-operative Congresses the representatives of a succession of co-operative productive societies, cropping up and dying down with disconcerting suddenness. After a succession of

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Trade Unionism*, by S. and B. Webb, chapter iii., "The Revolutionary Period, 1829-42."

<sup>2</sup> For information about British Christian Socialism and its leaders see *Christian Socialism, 1848-54*, by Charles E. Raven, an admirable account of the founders of Christian Socialism, though, I think, an over-enthusiastic description of their advocacy of the ideal of the self-governing workshop. F. D. Maurice and his friends, who started with no experience of British business enterprise, seem to have thought that because they themselves, as promoters and financial guarantors, were inspired by benevolence, they could transfer, with their capital, this emotion of service to the little group of craftsmen they set up as profit-makers. As a matter of fact, they were appealing to the self-interest of the workers, as F. D. Maurice's friend, F. J. A. Hort, pointed out to his fellow-ecclesiastic:

"Just then I heard of the forthcoming Socialist Tracts, and added a postscript wishing him success, but protesting against the cant of praising the meritoriousness and benevolence of those who joined an association. . . .

"Nor is selfishness a whit removed; *he* [the working member of the Co-operative Productive Society] seeks '*our* interest,' 'the interest of that of which *I* am a part,' instead of '*my* interest'; and I own I do not see what is gained by the change. Of course he may be unselfish under such circumstances, but not more so than under a state of competition" (*Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, by his son Arthur Fenton Hort, vol. i. 1896, p. 152 and pp. 141-2).

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

disastrous experiments by some of the richer and more powerful unions, Trade Union officials, whilst urging the co-operators to put in practice the faith they professed, politely refused to use their societies' funds for the employment of their own members. For in spite of all the allurements of the self-governing workshop, whether it was deemed to be promoting the spirit of Christian fellowship among the workers or stimulating their pecuniary self-interest, the ideal of the control of industry by the workers concerned had the supreme demerit *that it would not work*.<sup>1</sup> Either the co-operative productive society failed, after no very lengthy endurance, or it ceased, in one way or another, to be self-governing. At best, the concern was taken over by the Co-operative Wholesale Society, or by a group of local consumers' co-operative societies; at worst, it petered out as an employer's profit-sharing scheme, with the workers excluded from any effective share in the management of the establishment in which they worked, whilst their Trade Union had been undermined; or it degenerated into the lowest type of modern industry, the small master system, with its inevitable "sweating" of subordinate workers, who were actually excluded from membership.

To one who had been bred in a stronghold of capitalism, the Consumers' Co-operative Movement seemed a unique romance in the industrial history of the world. For this closely knit organisation of hundreds of retail shops, grouped

<sup>1</sup> For the cause of this failure of Associations of Producers, I must refer the student to *Co-operative Production*, by Benjamin Jones, 1894, and my own *Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, 1891, to which may be added *The New Statesman* Supplement of February 14, 1914, on Co-operative Production and Profit-sharing, by S. and B. Webb. For the convenience of the student I give in the Appendix (E) to this book the conclusions embodied in this Supplement, now out of print.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

into two colossal trading and manufacturing federations, was being administered by men of the manual working class, at salaries which at that time did not exceed, and frequently fell below, the earnings of a skilled compositor or a foreman engineer. How could I explain, by the canons of capitalist economics, the continuous growth of a great business enterprise, which was not making the private fortune of any man or group of men, but was increasing the individual incomes, the accumulated wealth and also the economic freedom of a whole self-governing community, to-day comprising a quarter or even a third of all the families of Great Britain; wielding a working capital approaching a hundred million pounds; doing a trade of nearly two hundred millions sterling annually; and still, as at all times, effectively open to any newcomer to join and participate in its benefits on equal terms with the original promoters?

I found enlightenment, curiously enough, in a development of the Theory of Value—implicit in my own hypothesis, to which I have already referred,<sup>1</sup> of the emergence of exchange value in the *correspondence* of economic faculty with economic desire. The self-governing workshop was rooted in the commonly held theory which Karl Marx had accepted from David Ricardo, William Thompson and Thomas Hodgskin, that "Labour is the source of Value." But this "did not work"! What the Rochdale Pioneers had unwittingly discovered, by the method of trial and error, was that the essential element in the successful conduct of production is the *correspondence* of the application of labour with some actually felt specific desire.

Throughout my study of the Co-operative Movement during 1889, I had in fact been watching the very process

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix (D).

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

of trial and error by which this community of working men was establishing a "New Social Order." The eight-and-twenty flannel weavers at Rochdale started, in 1844, to sell groceries to themselves, partly to free themselves from the toils of "truck," but also with the idea of accumulating a capital fund with which they might realise their ideal of self-employment in flannel weaving<sup>1</sup>—very much as the congregation of a chapel organises a bazaar to raise money for buying an organ. In order to attract purchasers to their store, they pressed each new customer to become a member of their society, and, as such, entitled to share in its management and accumulate capital. In order to secure continuous membership, they invented the device of "dividend on purchase," whereby the margin between the cost of the article and the retail selling price was returned to the purchaser himself, as a sort of deferred rebate or discount on his purchases—a sum of money which each purchasing member found automatically put to his credit in the books of the society until this credit amounted to the one pound qualifying share. From the use of one room in a member's house, in which tea and other groceries were served out by enthusiastic members without remuneration, the "Rochdale Pioneers" became a steadily growing department store, employing clerks and shop assistants,

<sup>1</sup> In 1854 the members of the Rochdale Pioneers' Society attempted to carry out their ideal of a self-governing workshop; and a number of them started the Rochdale Co-operative Manufacturing Society. Until 1860 they divided profits on an equal ratio of pence for every sovereign of capital invested or wages paid. Presently the fourteen hundred shareholders, of whom only three hundred worked in the mill, objected to this division of the profit; and in 1862 the bonus to labour was finally dropped out of the rules by a three to one majority, the concern becoming a mere joint stock company. (See *John T. W. Mitchell*, by Percy Redfern, 1923, pp. 27-9.)

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

who, though usually sons or daughters of members, were merely engaged at current wages. In those early days there was no thought of profit-sharing with the employees, for the very good reason that it seemed that there were no "profits" to divide, the so-called "dividend on purchase" being merely a device for returning to the consumer the whole of what proved to have been charged in excess of the cost of production, and of carrying on and developing the common services rendered by the society to its members. In this indirect way the Rochdale Pioneers fulfilled Robert Owen's principle of eliminating profit and extinguishing the profit-maker.

Now, the device of dividing the margin between cost and price among customer-members, according to their purchases, has many direct and indirect advantages. One peculiar and possibly unforeseen result was that it established the Co-operative Movement on the broad foundation of human democracy, in which each member, whatever his holding, had one vote and one only. But it was a democracy of the customers of the store, and thus of the consumers, not of the producers of the commodities and services concerned, a democracy which was by its very nature bound to be, as it has in effect proved to be, perpetually open to newcomers, without limitation of class or sex, for the simple reason that the larger the number of customers, the greater the financial prosperity. It was, however, not merely a new constitution for industrial organisation that the Rochdale Pioneers had discovered. What was ultimately more important is that they had tumbled, in a fit of characteristically British absent-mindedness, to an essential factor of exchange value years before the professional political economists had realised either its nature or its importance. They were, in fact, Jevonians before Stanley

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

Jevons, in discovering *that it was in recognised "utility," or specific demand, that lay the dominating and delimiting factor of exchange value.* Unlike the self-governing workshops and industrial partnerships, the eleven hundred co-operative stores, and their two great federations, the English and Scottish Wholesale Societies, produce, and cannot help recognising that they produce for a known market. One of my experiences in the spring of 1889 was to watch how the quarterly meetings of the delegates from the managing committees of the stores, and the periodical buyers' conferences with the expert officials of the Wholesale Societies, brought together in conference, on the one hand, those who reported the wants of the customers, and, on the other, the directors and managers of the trading and productive departments which were undertaking to supply these wants. What interested me was the unself-consciousness of these co-operators, whether members or officials, about the nature of their activity. The self-governing workshop was born of a theory, or was it a sentiment? and the whole movement of the associations of producers has been, in one country after another, nursed and dandled by successive generations of intellectual philanthropists and world reformers, and even by capitalist governments. The Co-operative Movement of Great Britain, manifested in the local store and the national Wholesale Society, perhaps because it was genuinely of working-class origin, achieved without intending; grew, indeed, to maturity before there was any accurate formulation of the theory on which it was based. To organise industry from the consumption end, and to place it, from the start, upon the basis of "production for use" instead of "production for profit," under the control and direction, not of the workers as producers, but of themselves as con-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

sumers, was the outstanding discovery and practical achievement of the Rochdale Pioneers.

The question arises, why was it that, from 1869 to 1889, the co-operators in congress assembled had never recognised this transfiguration of their movement? I suggest an explanation. The co-operative statisticians, lecturers and publicists of those years, as well as the university professors of political economy,<sup>1</sup> were dominated by the barren dis-

<sup>1</sup> In his carefully prepared address to the Ipswich Co-operative Congress, Professor Marshall seemed to me disingenuous in insisting (in contradiction of his statements as an economist) on there being a fundamental difference between "production" and "distribution," and in refusing to see that the distinction between successful and unsuccessful working-class co-operation lay not in difference of function, that is, in the distinction between trading and manufacturing, but in difference of constitution, that is, the distinction between government by the consumers and government by the producers respectively.

"I have already laid stress on the fact," he told the co-operators, "that the success of the distributive societies is no proof of the efficiency of working men as undertakers of business enterprises. Their inherent advantages are so great that they may sometimes prosper fairly even though their management is but second-rate; and there is no question that some of them have done so. Their success gives no ground for anticipating that a productive society would succeed when it had to run the gauntlet of competition with private firms managed by business men quick of thought and quick of action, full of resource and of inventive power, specially picked for their work and carefully trained" (*Report of the Twenty-first Annual Co-operative Congress*, 1889, pp. 9-10).

Thus in suggesting that co-operative production had failed whilst co-operative trading had succeeded, he ignored the already successful manufacturing departments of the English and Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Societies and of smaller federations of the consumers' Co-operative Movement. In the thirty years that have elapsed, manufacturing enterprise by the consumers' Co-operative Movement has greatly increased in range and variety. The co-operators have even begun, through an international organisation of consumers' societies, to manufacture for export commodities to exchange for co-operatively

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

inction between "Distribution" and "Production." The current assumption was that the economic activities of the retail shop and the wholesale warehouse were so radically different from those of the workshop and the factory, the mine and the farm, that it was both practicable and desirable to adopt an entirely different basis of government, and an entirely different method of remuneration, for shop-keeping, warehousing and cartage on the one hand, and for manufacturing, mining and agriculture on the other. Not even the most enthusiastic believer in co-operative production suggested that the retail store should be managed by the counter-men, the packers or the carmen, or their elected representatives. On the contrary, the model rules of the Co-operative Union, drafted by the leading exponent of the ideal of the self-governing workshop, Edward Vansittart Neale himself, expressly disqualified the employees of the store, *just because they were employees, not merely for election on the committee of management, but even for participation, as ordinary customer-members of the society, in voting for the committee !* Nevertheless, it was held by all the middle-class theorists and, in a muddle-headed way, also by nearly all the working-class co-operators who troubled to think about it, that the ideal government in any manufacturing process was government by the workers in that process; and that it was these men and produced foodstuffs and materials of other countries. Further, the consumers' Co-operative Movement has not only marched triumphantly from retail trading to wholesale trading, and from wholesale trading to manufacturing and importing raw products raised by itself on its own plantations in tropical and semi-tropical countries, but has also created a great financial organisation for insurance and banking, thereby accumulating the necessary capital for its constantly developing enterprise, and making itself independent of profit-making bankers, brokers and underwriters.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

women, and not the consumers of their products, who ought to absorb any surplus that (after defraying incidental expenses) might prove to remain out of the margin necessarily existing between the bare cost of production in the factory and the retail price paid over the counter by the customer. The practical administrators who were at that time refusing to transform the manufacturing departments of the larger stores, and those of the Wholesale Societies, into self-governing workshops, and were even declining to adopt profit-sharing, did so only on the plea "that the time was not ripe for it." I never heard them dispute the ideal justice or ultimate expediency of associations of producers. Alone among co-operators John Mitchell, the business genius who had built up the English Co-operative Wholesale Society, stood out as the advocate of government by the consumers in the interests of the consumers, not only in retail and wholesale trading, but in manufacturing and mining, farming and shipowning, insurance and banking. Unfortunately he was not only intellectually inarticulate, but also a megalomaniac about his subject; he failed to see the limitation of government by *voluntary* associations of consumers to industries in which the day-by-day consumers constitute both a practicable and a desirable unit of association.<sup>1</sup> This condition is obviously unfulfilled

<sup>1</sup> John Mitchell seldom spoke at the Co-operative Congress. But at the Carlisle Congress in 1887, stung by a violent attack by Tom Hughes on the policy of the Co-operative Wholesale Society in starting manufacturing departments, he asserted that "There was no higher form of co-operative production upon the face of the earth than the Wholesale Society manifested in its co-operative works. . . . He would start productive works, when they would pay, in every centre in the United Kingdom; and would never be satisfied until the Wholesale manufactured everything that its members wore. . . . If co-operation was to be permanently successful, we should have to finally settle this question—To whom does profit and the increment of value

## ‘WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

among the users of roads and railways, or in such common services as main drainage and hospitals, schools and police, and much else that is necessary to the well-being of the whole community over a long period of time, needing inevitably to be paid for otherwise than item by item, over the counter, by the individual consumers as such. This all-important limitation, I may note in passing, had not occurred to me during my own investigations of 1889; it was revealed to me, as I shall presently tell, in the course of the development of “My Apprenticeship” into “Our Partnership.” What was more directly relevant to the controversy raging in the Co-operative Movement as I knew it in the ‘eighties was Mitchell’s inability to perceive that consumers’ co-operation, unless tempered by the intervention of the political State through Factory Acts, and by due participation in the management of each enterprise by powerful Trade Unions, might become an effective coadjutor of the co-existing capitalist employer in the exploitation of the worker.

My second discovery was that democracies of consumers, if they are to be a desirable as well as a practicable alternative to private profit-making, must be complemented by democracies of workers by hand and by brain, that is, by Trade Unions and professional societies. In attending

belong? He held that, as it was created by the industrious classes, it belonged to them. Profit was made by the consumption of the people, and the consumers ought to have the profit . . . He advised co-operators never to be satisfied until they got control of the entire producing, banking, shipping, and every other interest in the country. The Wholesale had £100,000 in Consols, and in course of time co-operators might possess the whole of the National Debt of this country. If co-operators saved their money they might in time possess the railways and canals, besides finding employment for themselves” (*Report of Nineteenth Annual Co-operative Congress, 1887, pp. 6-7*).



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

the committee meetings of local stores or lunching with the directors of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, I noticed that they were completely absorbed either in discussing what their members were buying and would in future buy, or in discovering how the commodities or services could be produced at a lower cost and of a better quality. Unless the manager of the store reported the dishonesty or incapacity of a shop assistant, or unless a threat of a strike disturbed the equanimity of the Board of the Wholesale Society, they were *absent-minded* about the conditions of employment of the rapidly increasing staff of the local stores and manufacturing departments. A subordinate official would normally select whatever additional staff was required, at whatever wages he found it necessary to pay, under conditions not differing essentially from those of neighbouring shopkeepers or manufacturers. The natural bias of the committees of management, like that of all administrators, was to "maintain discipline" and keep down cost of production. They inevitably tended to ignore the way this maintenance of discipline and lowering the cost of production might affect the daily life of the employees. Though the co-operative society meant to be a "good employer" (and did, in fact, sometimes lead profit-making enterprise in such boons as the weekly half-holiday), it never occurred to co-operative committees to allow the workers concerned any "rights" beyond what was customary in profit-making establishments. The position was rendered more serious by the fact that in the 'eighties and 'nineties all commercial employees, and more especially the shop assistants, were among the lowest paid, the hardest worked and the most arbitrarily treated of the wage-earning class;<sup>1</sup> whilst the managers of the manufacturing depart-

<sup>1</sup> In 1893 Mr. (now Sir) William Maxwell, then Chairman of

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

ments of the stores and the Wholesale Societies found themselves in direct competition with the notorious sweated industries of cheap clothing and cheap furniture.

For these and other reasons it became clear to me that the existence of strong Trade Unions, enforcing standard rates and the normal working day, and protecting the individual from arbitrary fines and capricious dismissal, was an essential to the economic welfare and sense of personal freedom of the worker within the consumers' Co-operative Movement as it was in profit-making industry. Thus, "government from above" had to be supplemented by "government from below."

Once again, therefore [I told the co-operators in 1891], by a conjunction of co-operative and Trade Union organisation, we must bring the producer and consumer face to face. I do not mean that the bootmaker can sell his boots to the weaver, while the weaver disposes of his cloth to the farmer's wife; this personal relationship is no longer possible in a commercial system transformed by the industrial revolution. Barter between individuals

the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, created great consternation in the Movement by reading a paper at the Bristol Co-operative Congress, in which he described what seemed to him the excessive hours of labour exacted from co-operative employees. Taking only the hours during which the stores were open, which understated the actual day of the assistants by something like 5 or 10 per cent., he showed that 93.5 of the societies were open for business for more than 60 hours per week; 43.4 per cent. of them were open for more than 66 hours per week; whilst 163 societies, or 13.5 per cent. of those making returns, were open from 70 to no less than 85 hours per week. Slowly and gradually did improvement take place. In 1909, sixteen years later, there were still 40 societies in the last category, 123 in the last but one, whilst 947, or 76.7 of the total, were still open for more than 60 hours per week (*The Working Life of Shop Assistants*, by J. Hallsworth and R. J. Davies, 1913, pp. 78-80; quoted in *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement*, by S. and B. Webb, 1921, p. 189). For a description of the relations of the Co-operative Movement to co-operative employees up to 1920 see chapter iii. of that book.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

must be superseded by negotiations, through authorised representatives, between groups of workers and groups of consumers. Individualist exchange must follow individualist production, and give place to collective bargaining.

To gain a clear conception of the collective bargain—of the social relation which will supersede the individual relation—let us imagine, therefore, that this industrial democracy were fully developed and that industry were organised by associations of consumers (whether voluntary or compulsory, the Store, the Wholesale Societies, the Municipality and the State), while all workers were united in Trade Unions. Then the official of the Weavers' Union would debate questions of wages and technical training with the official of the Store or the Municipality; the college of surgeons or physicians would, as at present, determine the standard and subjects of examination for the medical student and fix fees for medical attendance, subject perhaps to the democratic control of a Minister of Health. The official of the Trade Union and the official of the community would, it is true, represent the rival interests of different sections of the community. But as members of one State the interests of their constituents are ultimately identical. For under a democratic organisation of industry it will be recognised that the well-being of each individual will be indissolubly bound up in a high standard of capacity among the whole body of citizens.

Nor is it difficult to discover the practical basis for a compromise between the immediately conflicting interests of the consumer and producer of special commodities or services, supposing that these different groups of citizens should persistently refuse to recognise the "larger expediency" of efficient citizenship among all classes of the community. Fleeming Jenkin, in his *Essay on Trade Unions*, has expressed it with admirable conciseness:

"But while the wants of men determine their pay, it is the demand for men of that class which determines how many shall be employed at that pay. This is a corrective to discontent. If their wants are great, few or no men of the given class may get any pay at all. It is the seller of labour who determines the price, but it is the buyer who determines the number of transactions. Capital" (or the community) "settles how many men are wanted at given wages, but labour settles what wages the men shall have."

It is noteworthy [I add in a note to the above paragraph] that this determination by a Trade Union or Association of Professionals of the price at which they will work, or the educa-

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

tional qualifications upon which they will insist, is not demurred to by the capitalist class in professions such as the Law and Medicine, of which they have practically the monopoly. But the limited and broken authority of working-class Unions, the attempt on their part to secure a full subsistence wage for their members, is bitterly resented as an interference with individual liberty.<sup>1</sup>

### THE SUCCESSIVE STAGES IN SOCIALIST EVOLUTION

Can I describe in a few sentences the successive steps in my progress towards Socialism?

My studies in East End life had revealed the physical misery and moral debasement following in the track of the rack-renting landlord and capitalist profit-maker in the swarming populations of the great centres of nineteenth-century commerce and industry. It is true that some of these evils—for instance, the low wages, long hours and insanitary conditions of the sweated industries, and the chronic under-employment at the docks—could, I thought, be mitigated, perhaps altogether prevented by appropriate legislative enactment and Trade Union pressure. By these methods it might be possible to secure to the manual workers, so long as they were actually at work, what might be regarded from the physiological standpoint as a sufficient livelihood. Thus, the first stage in the journey—in itself a

<sup>1</sup> I believe that this was the first use of exactly the phrase "Collective Bargaining" as a process for settling wages. See *The Co-operative Movement of Great Britain*, by Beatrice Potter, 1891, pp. 216–18. This little book has had a remarkable career, especially in foreign parts, having been translated into about a dozen languages, the earliest being a German translation by Professor Brentano, published in 1892, and the latest to be authorised, in 1925, being a Finnish version. Its largest circulation is said to have been in Russia, in the early years of this century, when it was used as a text-book in starting the Russian Co-operative Movement. It has never been revised, or brought down to date; and it has now been superseded by *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement*, by S. and B. Webb, 1921.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

considerable departure from early Victorian individualism—was an all-pervading control, in the interest of the community, of the economic activities of the landlord and the capitalist.

But however ubiquitous and skilful this State regulation and Trade Union intervention might become, I could see no way out of the recurrent periods of inflation and depression—meaning, for the vast majority of the nation, alternate spells of overwork and unemployment—intensified, if not actually brought about by the speculative finance, manufacture and trading that was inspired by the mad rush to secure the maximum profit for the minority who owned the instruments of production. Moreover, “man does not live by bread alone”; and without some “socialism”—for instance, public education and public health, public parks and public provision for the aged and infirm, open to all and paid for out of rates and taxes, with the addition of some form of “work or maintenance” for the involuntarily unemployed—even capitalist governments were reluctantly recognising, though hardly fast enough to prevent race-deterioration, that the régime of private property could not withstand revolution. This “national minimum” of civilised existence, to be legally ensured for every citizen, was the second stage in my progress towards socialism.

There remained to be considered the psychological evils of a community permanently divided into a nation of the rich and a nation of the poor, into a minority always giving orders and a vast majority always obeying orders. For the example of the United States showed that a rise in wages and an improvement in technique, far from promoting economic equality, might, through increasing efficiency, and the consequently augmented yield of rent and interest,

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

produce even greater inequalities in wealth and personal power between one citizen and another than prevailed in less favoured capitalist countries. "Choose equality and flee greed," said Menander; for, as Matthew Arnold had explained to an unheeding generation, "our inequality materialises our upper class, vulgarises our middle class, brutalises our lower."<sup>1</sup> At this point I remained for some time, because I could see no alternative to the authority of the profit-making employer.

Now it was in the constitution and activities of the consumers' co-operative movement, as developed by the British working class, with its production for use, and its elimination of the profit-maker, that I perceived a possible alternative to modern business enterprise, and one which would, at the same time, increase the security of livelihood and equalise the opportunity for self-development among the whole people. It was, in fact, by the recognition that the essential feature in the co-operative movement was not the advantages that it brought in the way of economical housekeeping and the thrifty accumulation of continual small savings, but the invention of a new type of industrial organisation—the government of industry by the community of consumers, for their common benefit as consumers—that my difficulties were removed.

To this organisation of commerce and industry by democracies of consumers, I added the complementary organisation of democracies of workers by hand and by brain, organised in Trade Unions or in professional societies, in order to protect personal dignity and individual freedom by giving to the community of workers in each vocation such participation in the administration of their service as

<sup>1</sup> See the essay on "Equality" in *Mixed Essays*, by Matthew Arnold, p. 92.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

might prove to be practicable and desirable. It was, indeed, with a view to discovering the exact sphere of vocational organisation in the government of industries and services that I decided, early in 1889, to make the British Trade Union Movement my next field of enquiry, and I actually attended, in September of that year, the Annual Trades Union Congress that was meeting at Dundee during the critical week of the epoch-making strike of the London dock labourers.

In the ensuing year, whilst I was writing my little book, I got some further illumination in discussions with a leading member of the Fabian Society, out of which emerged (among other and more personally significant transformations !) the recognition that the municipality, and even the State itself, in so far as they undertook the provision of commodities and services for their citizens, were, from the economic standpoint, also associations of consumers, based upon an obligatory instead of upon a voluntary membership. Thus, the conception of the organisation of " production, distribution and exchange " by the consumers, not for individual profit but for the common good, could be extended from merely voluntary groupings, associated for the purchase of household requisites, to the obligatory association of all the residents of a city, for every civic purpose; and I saw a new meaning in the steady growth of municipal enterprise and other forms of Local Government. I may note, in passing, that this analogy between the consumers' co-operative movement and modern municipal socialism was further strengthened when we discovered, in the course of our investigation into the Local Government of the eighteenth century, that the characteristic functions of the modern municipality had their origin, not in the ancient municipal corporation based on voca-

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

tional organisation, but in *voluntary associations of consumers* which had come into existence spontaneously for the very purpose of meeting new needs and providing new services.<sup>1</sup> Further study of the constantly developing consumers' co-operative movement in all the European countries opened a vista of the eventual supersession of the export trade by a system of deliberately arranged reciprocal imports, organised by communities of consumers, whether states, municipalities or co-operative societies ; each importing country thus obtaining from other countries *merely what it found it desirable to order*—thus avoiding all questions of protective tariffs or “dumping.” To-day we can see this system of reciprocal imports actually begun among the Co-operative Wholesale Societies of the various European countries, without any toll of profit to the capitalist trader or banker, and without any occasion for either booms or depressions of trade, or for loss or profit in the mercantile sense.<sup>2</sup>

It was this vision of a gradually emerging new social order, to be based on the deliberate adjustment of economic faculty and economic desire, and to be embodied in an interlocking dual organisation of democracies of consumers and democracies of producers—voluntary as well as obligatory, and international as well as national—that seemed to me to afford a practicable framework for the future co-operative commonwealth.

<sup>1</sup> For a description of these voluntary associations of consumers becoming, through Local Acts, Local Government Authorities, see *English Local Government: Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes*, by S. and B. Webb, 1922 ; especially chapter vii., on the emergence of the new principles of government, pp. 397–486.

<sup>2</sup> *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement*, by S. and B. Webb, 1921, p. 289.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

### THE PASSAGE FROM LIFE

The enquiry into the Co-operative Movement was carried out under the deepening gloom of my father's last illness; and at times I despaired of completing my task. In the pages of my diary, during the autumn of 1889, I watch myself falling back for encouragement on a growing faith in the possibility of reorganising society by the application of the scientific method directed by the religious spirit.

Unfit for work: alone with poor dear father and his shadow-like mind and irresponsible character. Depressed, I take up a volume of Matthew Arnold's poems and read these words as the expression of the ideal life towards which I constantly strive:

Of toil unsevered from tranquillity !  
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplished in repose  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry !

This state of toil unsevered from tranquillity I sometimes feel I have attained. Still, one is troubled (alas, too often troubled) with the foolish dreams of personal success and with a deep depression of personal failure. I love my work; that is my salvation; I delight in this slow stepping towards truth. Search after truth by the careful measurement of facts is the enthusiasm of my life. And of late this has been combined with a realisation of the common aim of the great army of truth-seekers: the ennobling of human life. It has been enriched by the consciousness of the supreme unity of science, art, morality; the eternal trinity of the good, the beautiful and the true; knit together in the ideal towards which humanity is constantly striving, knowingly or unknowingly, with failure or success according to the ebb and flow of pure motive and honest purpose. [MS. diary, August 17, 1889.]

Constantly during the last week, as I have eagerly read every detail of the Strike [the famous Dock Strike of August 1889], I have been depressed by my own powerlessness to suggest any way out of the difficulty; I have been disheartened by a consciousness that my little mite of knowledge is not of much avail—that the great instinctive movements of the mass are perhaps,

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

after all, more likely to effect than the carefully reasoned judgments of the scientific (or pseudo-scientific ?) observer. . . . Then I have realised that if we are to get a basis for action through knowledge of facts, that knowledge must be far more complete and exhaustive than it is ever likely to be in my time; certainly than it is likely to be in my case. For instance, the little knowledge I gained of the London Docks is practically useless. In order to offer an opinion of any value, one would need to thoroughly master the facts about trade at the docks; to realise exactly the methods of management; to compare these with other methods of management so as to discover deficiencies and possibilities. Is that kind of exhaustive knowledge, even granting the opportunity and the ability and the strength to acquire it, open to a mere observer? Is it not the exclusive opportunity of the great organiser? On the other hand, this realisation of the extent of the knowledge required shows me that in my desire to master commercial and financial facts as a key to the labour problem I was guided by a true instinct; that on my capacity to master these facts will rest my power to influence for good the condition of my people.

. . . . .

Finished up my work for the summer, and leave for a fortnight's change to-morrow [this was the visit to the Trades Union Congress at Dundee]. The summer has passed quickly away with the content of a fully occupied life. The work has been hard and to a great extent mechanical, and in my spare time I have usually been too tired to enjoy beauty, so that my existence has been for the most part a mere routine of sleep, work, food and exercise. Poor dear father, his companionship is saddening, inexpressibly depressing in its soullessness. And yet, now and again there are glimpses of calm reason and warm feeling which make me wonder whether the general habit of the family of cajoling and flattering him, of ignoring all responsible thought or action in him, is right and sound? If there be an immortal principle in him, are we degrading it? But the assumption is that he is a creature whose effectual life is gone but that love and duty bid us make him physically easy and mentally content; that there is no room for moral progress or retrogression; that morally he is dead. Sometimes I think that the repulsiveness of the conclusion must mean untruth in the premises. At other times I see in our method of treatment simply a logical view of the facts of human life; a realisation of the inevitable. [MS. diary, August 31, 1889.]

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

It was a hard week, scarcely a holiday [I write in my diary after a lively description of the Trades Union Congress and its personalities, which I reserve for some future account of our investigation into Trade Unionism]. When I arrived early on Sunday morning at Auberon Herbert's little cottage on the banks of Loch Awe I was thoroughly exhausted, with a bad cold in the head into the bargain. A somewhat dreary little plastered cottage, with none of the charm of "Old House," supplemented by two wooden shanties; low brushwood and unkempt grass surrounding it. In front of the Loch, behind the moor, mountains rising in the distance, not wild or grand, not exactly beautiful; pretty conventional lake scenery, nothing more. Inside, no fires, and constant open windows; comfortless furniture. The children (the boy this time at home) most attractive; the elderly idealist interesting and becoming an intimate friend. But with his nature, distance lends enchantment to the view! There is restfulness in his gentle courtesy and idealistic aloofness from the passions which move mankind. But both courtesy and idealism cover subtle egotism and a waywardness of nature, a persistent determination to follow his own caprices of thought and feeling, which make him impracticable and inconsiderate in all the relations of life. (Is this fair? He is charming with his children.) His little fads about his health are ludicrous; no sound is to be heard before he is called in the morning; no window to be shut in his presence; he cannot take exercise but needs air, and nothing must interfere with his afternoon sailing. What between vegetarianism and valetudinarianism, he is rapidly sinking into old age, though he is a healthy man of fifty.

I enjoyed my days there. Between us we started a novel, *Looking Forward*—an answer to *Looking Backward*—for which I supplied the plot and the characters, while he is to work out a reformed world on individualist lines. He told me during the long evenings, looking on to the moonlit lake, the story of his life. . . .

A solitary day at Stirling, feeling unutterably sad—a long night journey—the exquisite beauty of the early morning spread over the Monmouth valley as I drive up to our mountain home; the faithful Neale with all things prepared; the breakfast table with a family party of Playnes; cordial welcome; long gossip. The darling old father is delighted to see "my little Bee"; in one word—"Home." And now for work. [MS. diary, Sept. 22, 1889.]

This last month or so I have been haunted by a longing to

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

create characters and to move them to and fro among fictitious circumstances. To put the matter plainly—by the vulgar wish to write a novel. In the early morning hours when one's half-awakened brain seems so strangely fruitful, I see before me persons and scenes; I weave plots, and clothe persons, scenes and plots in my own philosophy. There is intense attractiveness in the comparative ease of descriptive writing. Compare it with work in which movements of commodities, percentages, depreciations, averages, and all the ugly horrors of commercial facts are in the dominant place, and must remain so if the work is to be worthful. . . . The whole multitude of novels I have read pass before me, the genius, the talent, the clever mechanism or the popularity-hunting of mediocrities—what have the whole lot of them, from the work of genius to the penny-a-liner, accomplished for the advancement of society on the one and only basis that can bring with it virtue and happiness—the scientific method? This supreme ambition to present some clear and helpful idea of the forces we must subdue and the forces we must liberate in order to bring about reformation may be absurdly out of proportion to my ability. But it alone is the faith, the enthusiasm of my life, the work which I feel called upon to do.

Still, I have in my mind some more dramatic representation of facts that can be given in statistical tables or in the letterpress that explains them; some way of bringing home to rich and poor those truths about social organisation that I may discover, illustrations of social laws in the terms of personal suffering, personal development and personal sin. But these must be delayed until I have discovered my laws! And as yet I am only on the threshold of my enquiries, far enough off, alas, from any general and definite conclusions. [MS. diary, Sept. 30, 1889.]

The very demon of melancholy gripping me, my imagination fastening on Amy Levy's story, a brilliant young authoress of seven-and-twenty, in the hey-day of success, who has chosen to die rather than stand up longer to live. We talk of courage to meet death; alas, in these terrible days of mental pressure it is courage to *live* that we most lack, not courage to die. It is the supreme courage of fighting a battle for an unknown leader, for an unknown cause, that fails us now and again. Poor Amy Levy! If there be no other faith for humanity but to eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die, she has done well and wisely in choosing death, for to our natures such contentment, such merriment, is not possible; we are the "unfit," and the sooner we leave our room to others, the better. But if this be

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

only a passage to other things, a pilgrimage among other pilgrims whom we may help and cheer on the way, then a brave and struggling life, a life in which suffering measures progress, has the deepest meaning—in truth, embraces the whole and the sole reason for human existence. [MS. diary, October 11, 1889.]

Five months' work here and at last I have got the table of contents of my first book. Now I can let my imagination play at construction instead of restricting all my energies to investigation. My spirits begin to rise as I see the whole subject mapped out before me and know exactly the extent of my discoveries and the boundaries of the ground that must be covered. In a week or so I shall have sketched out each chapter and shall have before me my plan of campaign for the next six months. [MS. diary, November 1889.]

The final entry in the diary for the year 1889 was written during a crisis in my father's illness which we all thought would be the last. It is a long account of his life, the better part being used as material in the first chapter of this book. Here I give the concluding paragraphs as they stand in the MS. diary because they reveal, more vividly than I can from memory, the happy relationship throughout life between the father and his nine daughters.

Companionship with him was a liberal education in human nature and in the affairs of the world; near relationship to him was a tie of extraordinary tenderness and charm owing to the absolute self-devotedness of his character. His own comfort, his own inclinations were unconsidered before the happiness of his wife, the welfare of his children. With him the domestic instinct was a passion to which all else was subordinated. . . .

Darling father! How your children have loved you: loving even your weaknesses, smiling over them tenderly like so many mothers. How we have all combined to blind you to the realities of your illness: nine diplomatists sitting round the old diplomatist, hiding things, smoothing things; and you all the while perhaps the most polished diplomatist of the lot; accepting the illusion as pleasanter than the fact: delighting in the diplomacy that you have taught us. With what gentle dignity you have

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

resigned your grasp on life, though not without an internal struggle, but all hidden from view.

"I know you did it for my good, dear child, but it is a little hard."

These were his only words when, a year after his first stroke, I refused absolutely to post his letter ordering his brokers to buy for speculation. He tried it again, but this time I checkmated him by writing privately to the brokers urging them on their honour to discourage it: I remember the queer expression when he read their letter—the passing look of irritation—then the bright glance at me when he perceived my move—the affectionate tone in which he next addressed me on some indifferent matter: the silent acknowledgement of my good intention, the inward chuckle over the smartness of his offspring; and from that moment the absolute and entire resignation of his affairs into Daniel's hands; betaking himself exclusively to the contracted routine of a shadow-like existence. His content would have been painful if one had not felt that it was reasoned out on his large unselfish philosophy of life; an idealised Epicureanism: the happiness of the world (*i.e.* of those around you) and of yourself as a unit of the world.

And now that he lies helpless, the vitality flickering to extinction: his limbs motionless, his breathing laboured, the last pleasure in his sleep, food and cigarette gone, he still brightens up to welcome his "bright-eyed daughter"; to compliment a middle-aged married woman on her good looks: to enquire how each husband is doing; to ask how much he will leave to his children. In the long hours of restlessness he broods over the success of his children, and finds reason for peace and satisfaction. "I want one more son-in-law" (a proof that he feels near his end, as he has discouraged the idea of matrimony for me, put it off as something I could easily attain), "a woman is happier married: I should like to see my little Bee married to a good strong fellow," and the darling old father dreams of the "little Bee" of long ago; he does not realise that she has passed away, leaving the strong form and determined features of the "glorified spinster" bending over him as a mother bends over her sick child. [MS. diary, November 26, 1889.]

### "THE OTHER ONE"

My father lingered on for another two years, barely conscious of his surroundings. But within a few weeks of

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

his ~~call~~ <sup>call</sup> for "one more son-in-law" there came "The

This culminating event of my life—for did it not lead to the rapid transformation of "My Apprenticeship" into "Our Partnership," and therefore to the ending of this book?—clearly deserves a preface. And this preface shall consist in a recollection of a mysterious penumbra, making me aware of a new and significant Presence in my environment at least a year before I was introduced to the little figure with a big head who was to become the man of my destiny, the source of unhoped-for happiness; and, be it added, the predominant partner of the firm of Webb!

It was, I think, in the spring of 1888 that my friend J. J. Dent, at that time General Secretary of the (working men's) Club and Institute Union, talked to me, in tones of mingled admiration and suspicion, about a group of clever young men who, with astonishing energy and audacity, were haranguing the London Radical clubs; contributing innumerable articles and paragraphs, signed or unsigned, to the *Star* and the *Daily Chronicle*, and distributing, far and wide, "Facts for Socialists," and other subversively plausible pamphlets. One result of these activities was a stream of resolutions to Liberal Headquarters and Liberal leaders, passed by Radical clubs and Trade Union branches, in favour of the legal eight hours day; of municipal ownership and administration of water, gas, tramways and docks for the profit of the ratepayers; of an unlimited extension of free educational and health services; and, in order to meet the cost, of stiff taxation of wealth by increased and steeply graduated income tax and death duties. "There are among them," said he, "some very clever speakers, but the man who organises the whole business, drafts the resolutions and writes the tracts, is Sidney Webb." Other

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

stray reports reached me to like effect, the gist of which I find expressed, a few years later, in the report of Bernard Shaw to the Fabian Conference of 1893.

“ In 1888 [he told the Conference] we had not been found out even by the *Star*. The Liberal party was too much preoccupied over Mr. O'Brien's breeches and the Parnell Commission, with its dramatic climax in the suicide of the forger Pigott, to suspect that the liveliness of the extreme left of the Radical wing in London meant anything but the usual humbug about working-class interests. We now adopted a policy which snapped the last tie between our methods and the sectarianism of the [Social Democratic] Federation. We urged our members to join the Liberal and Radical Associations of their districts, or, if they preferred it, the Conservative Associations. We told them to become members of the nearest Radical Club and Co-operative Store, and to get delegated to the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and the Liberal and Radical Union if possible. On these bodies we made speeches and moved resolutions, or, better still, got the Parliamentary candidate for the constituency to move them, and secured reports and encouraging little articles for him in the *Star*. We permeated the party organisations and pulled all the wires we could lay our hands on with our utmost adroitness and energy; and we succeeded so far that in 1889 we gained the solid advantage of a Progressive majority, full of ideas that would never have come into their heads had not the Fabian put them there, on the first London County Council. The generalship of this movement was undertaken chiefly by Sidney Webb, who played such bewildering conjuring tricks with the Liberal thimbles and the Fabian peas, that to this day both the Liberals and the sectarian socialists stand aghast at him. It was exciting while it lasted, all this ‘permeation of the Liberal party,’ as it was called; and no person with the smallest political intelligence is likely to deny that it made a foothold for us in the press, and pushed forward Socialism in municipal politics to an extent which can only be appreciated by those who remember how things stood before our campaign.”<sup>1</sup>

It was certainly surprising that, given all these activities of the Fabian Society during 1888–89, and absorbed as I

<sup>1</sup> Fabian Tract No. 41, *The Fabian Society: Its Early History*, by G. Bernard Shaw, 1892; also *History of Fabian Society*, by Edward Pease, 1925.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

was in political and economic problems, I failed to become known to any of the future Fabian essayists (apart from a slight acquaintance with Mrs. Annie Besant, then at the zenith of her power as a great popular orator) until January 1890. The explanation is, that I had entered the field of controversy from the standpoint of big enterprise, party politics and metropolitan philanthropy, and was biased against socialist solutions of political and economic problems; whilst the Fabians entered this same field as Radicals and rebels, drawn, by a vision of a new social order, from every vocation and many parts of the country. Further, my craft being that of an investigator, I was seeking enlightenment, not from socialist lecturers and theoretical pamphlets, but from an objective study of the Co-operative Movement and of Trade Unionism, the leaders of which were at that time contemptuous of the socialism that they knew. The great Dock Strike of August 1889, led, as it was, by three socialist workmen—John Burns, Tom Mann and Ben Tillett—together with the emergence of the “New Unionism,” with its reliance on political changes, altered the orientation of the Labour Movement itself. Meanwhile I had realised, as already described, that the working-class Co-operative Movement, as distinguished from the middle-class projects of self-governing workshops, industrial partnerships and schemes of profit-sharing, was essentially “collectivist” in character and aims, having for its object the elimination from industry of profit and the profit-maker, by the substitution of an open democracy, managing by the instrumentality of salaried officials the services that it desired. Hence when, in October 1889, a friend forwarded to me the recently published *Fabian Essays* as the true gospel of distinctively British socialism, I read this daintily-turned-out volume from cover to cover. In pass-

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

ing it on to J. C. Gray of the Co-operative Union, I find that I incidentally remarked (in a letter which he afterwards returned to me) that "by far the most significant and interesting essay is the one by Sidney Webb; *he has the historic sense.*" Those interested in tracing "affinities" may find amusement if not instruction in the fact that, in an appreciative review of Charles Booth's first volume published in the *Star* in the preceding spring, "The Other One" had observed that "the only contributor with any literary talent is Miss Beatrice Potter!"

What interested me in this particular Fabian essay was an early presentation of "the inevitability of gradualness."

Owing mainly to the efforts of Comte, Darwin and Herbert Spencer [writes the Fabian essayist of 1889] we can no longer think of the ideal society as an unchanging State. The social ideal from being static has become dynamic. The necessity of the constant growth and development of the social organism has become axiomatic. No philosopher now looks for anything but the gradual evolution of the new order from the old, without breach of continuity or abrupt change of the entire social tissue at any point during the progress. The new becomes itself old, often before it is consciously recognised as new; and history shows us no example of the sudden substitutions of Utopian and revolutionary romance.

Farther on in the essay the same thought is elaborated.

Advocates of social reconstruction [he tells his readers] have learnt the lesson of democracy, and know that it is through the slow and gradual turning of the popular mind to new principles that social reorganisation bit by bit comes. All students of society who are abreast of their time, Socialists as well as Individualists, realise that important organic changes can only be (1) democratic, and thus acceptable to a majority of the people, and prepared for in the minds of all; (2) gradual, and thus causing no dislocation, however rapid may be the rate of progress; (3) not regarded as immoral by the mass of the people, and thus not subjectively demoralising to them; and (4), in this country at any rate, constitutional and peaceful. Socialists may

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

therefore be quite at one with Radicals in their political methods. Radicals, on the other hand, are perforce realising that mere political levelling is insufficient to save a State from anarchy and despair. Both sections have been driven to recognise that the root of the difficulty is economic; and there is every day a wider consensus that the inevitable outcome of democracy is the control by the people themselves not only of their own political organisation, but, through that, also of the main instruments of wealth production; the gradual substitution of organised co-operation for the anarchy of the competitive struggle; and the consequent recovery, in the only possible way, of what John Stuart Mill calls "the enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of industry are able to take from the produce." The economic side of the democratic ideal is, in fact, socialism itself.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for our meeting in the first days of January 1890 was in itself a presage of our future comradeship in work. The critical phase of my father's illness having once again passed away, my sister Kate begged me to return with her husband to London for a week's rest and recreation, a welcome opportunity to get material I urgently needed for the first chapter of my forthcoming book. For whilst planning out my analysis of the Co-operative Movement of that day, I became aware that I lacked historical background. As was my wont, I applied for help to the best available authority: in this case to a London acquaintance, the distinguished historian of the eighteenth century, W. E. H. Lecky. "Why was there no working-class association in these years of turmoil and change?" I innocently and ignorantly asked. The answer to this incorrect assertion, disguised as a question, was a courteous, kindly

<sup>1</sup> *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, 1889, pp. 31 and 34-5. This original edition should be compared with the latest reprint of 1920, with its elaborate introduction; and with a fuller exposition of the same thesis in vol. xii. of the *Cambridge Modern History*, republished by the Fabian Society under the title *Towards Social Democracy*?

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

and lengthy explanation of the "reason why," meant to be helpful. But seeing that my mistaken assumption was apparently accepted as the starting-point of the answer, the professional historian led me nowhere. Not satisfied, I was on the look-out for another guide. "Sidney Webb, one of the Fabian Essayists, is your man," casually remarked a friendly woman journalist. "He knows everything: when you go out for a walk with him he literally pours out information." An interview was arranged during my short stay in London. A list of sources, accessible at the British Museum, including the then little known Place manuscripts, various State trials, old Chartist periodicals, and autobiographies of working-class agitators, was swiftly drafted, then and there, in a faultless handwriting, and handed to me. A few days later brought the first token of personal regard in the shape of a newly published pamphlet by the Fabian on the Rate of Interest, thus opening up a regular correspondence.

I give a few from many entries from the MS. diary revealing the new ferment at work.

Already one month of the New Year past. Father lying in a half-conscious, motionless state, recognising his children but not realising ideas or feelings; his life a flickering shadow which at times seems to disappear, then to gather substance, and for a while you imagine that it is the dear familiar spirit lighting up the worn-out frame.

I am, in the meantime, so long as life lasts, chained to his side; all my plans for this six months of the year indefinitely postponed. . . . Sometimes I feel discouraged. Not only am I baulked in carrying out my work, but with the lack of all accomplishment I begin to doubt my ability to do it. Continuous reading makes me feel a mere learner, entangled in my own growth, helpless before this ever-accumulating mass of facts, which must be carved into some intelligible shape indicative of its main characteristics. At present, the facts are heaped up around me, oppressing me with their weight.

I feel, too, exiled from the world of thought and action of other men and women. London is in a ferment: strikes are the order

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

of the day; the new Trade Unionism, with its magnificent conquest of the docks, is striding along with an arrogance rousing employers to a keen sense of danger, and to a determination to strike against strikes. The socialists, led by a small set of able young men (Fabian Society) are manipulating London radicals, ready, at the first checkmate of Trade Unionism, to voice a growing desire for State action; and I, from the peculiarity of my social position, should be in the midst of all parties, sympathetic with all, allied with none, in a true vantage ground for impartial observation of the forces at work. Burnett and the older Trade Unionists on the one side; Tom Mann, Tillett and Burns on the other; round about me co-operators of all schools, together with new acquaintances among the leading socialists. And as a background, all those respectable and highly successful men, my brothers-in-law, typical of the old reign of private property and self-interested action. . . . And then I turn from the luxurious homes of these picked men of the individualist system, and struggle through an East End crowd of the wrecks, the waifs and strays of this civilisation; or I enter a debating society of working men, and listen to the ever-increasing cry of active brains, doomed to the treadmill of manual labour, for a career in which intellectual initiative tells: the bitter cry of the nineteenth-century working man and the nineteenth-century woman. And the whole seems a whirl of contending actions, aspirations and aims, out of which I dimly see the tendency towards a socialist community, in which there will be individual freedom and public property, instead of class slavery and private possession of the means of subsistence of the whole people. At last I am a socialist! [MS. diary, February 1, 1890.]

Sidney Webb, the socialist, dined here [Devonshire House Hotel] to meet the Booths. A remarkable little man with a huge head and a tiny body, a breadth of forehead quite sufficient to account for the encyclopædic character of his knowledge. A Jewish nose, prominent eyes and mouth, black hair, somewhat unkempt, spectacles and a most bourgeois black coat shiny with wear. But I like the man. There is a directness of speech, an open-mindedness, an imaginative warm-heartedness which will carry him far. He has the self-assurance of one who is always thinking faster than his neighbours; who is untroubled by doubts, and to whom the acquisition of facts is as easy as the grasping of things; but he has no vanity and is totally unself-conscious. Hence his absence of consciousness as to treading on his neighbours' corns. Above all, he is utterly disinterested, and is, I

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

believe, genuine in his faith that collective control and collective administration will diminish, if not abolish, poverty. [MS. diary, February 14, 1890.]

Every day my social views take a more decidedly socialist turn, every hour reveals fresh instances of the curse of gain without labour; the endless perplexities of the rich, the never-failing miseries of the poor. In this household [there are] ten persons living on the fat of the land in order to minister to the supposed comfort of one poor old man. All this faculty expended to satisfy the assumed desires of a being wellnigh bereft of desire. The whole thing is a vicious circle as irrational as it is sorrowful. We feed our servants well, keep them in luxurious slavery, because we hate to see discomfort around us. But they and we are consuming the labour of others and giving nothing in return, except useless services to a dying life past serving. Here are thirteen dependents consuming riches and making none, and no one the better for it. [MS. diary, April 22, 1890.]

Glasgow Co-operative Congress    Exquisite Whitsun weather. A long journey up in third-class saloon, I, in one of the two comfortable seats of the carriage, with S. W. squatted on a port-manteau by my side, and relays of working-men friends lying at my feet, discussing earnestly Trade Unionism, co-operation and socialism. S. W.'s appearance among them surprises, and, on the whole, pleases them.

"He is humbler than I have ever seen him before," says Vaughan Nash; <sup>1</sup> "quite a different tone."

"Let us all work together as far as we can go; by the time we have got there, depend on it, we Co-operators will be willing to go further," declares emphatically Hey, a member of the Central Board, and Secretary to the Ironmoulders' Trade Union.

In the evening S. W. and I wandered through the Glasgow streets. A critical twenty-four hours, followed by another long walk by glorious sunset through the crowded streets,

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan Nash, C.B., C.V.O., born 1861, a lifelong student of Trade Unionism and co-operation, was at that time a journalist. He became for seven years the confidential private secretary of two successive Prime Ministers, 1905-12; and then Vice-Chairman of the Development Commission. With Hubert (afterwards Sir Hubert) Llewellyn Smith he wrote *The Story of the Dockers' Strike*, 1890; and, after visiting India during the famine of 1900, *The Great Famine*, 1901.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

knocking up against drunken Scots. With glory in the sky and hideous bestiality on the earth, two socialists came to a working compact.

"You understand you promise me to realise that the chances are a hundred to one that nothing follows but friendship. . . ." [Glasgow, MS. diary, Whitsun 1890.]

A day out in Epping Forest : "When I left you yesterday [said he] (we had travelled up from Haslemere, where I had stayed at the Frederic Harrisons', and he with the Pearsall Smiths) I went straight home; found two urgent letters, one from O'Brien begging me to write the London articles for the *Speaker*; the other from Massingham telling me I must review Marshall's new book for the *Star*. I went straight to the Club and read right through Marshall's six hundred pages—got up, staggering under it. It is a great book, nothing new—showing the way, not following it. For all that, it is a great book, it will supersede Mill. But it will not make an epoch in Economics. Economics has still to be re-made. Who is to do it? Either you must help me to do it; or I must help you. . . ." We talked economics, politics, the possibility of inspiring socialism with faith leading to works. He read me poetry, as we lay in the Forest, Keats and Rossetti, and we parted. [MS. diary, July 27, 1890.]

Throughout the remaining months of 1890 we saw little of each other. When not in attendance on my father, I was staying in Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Leicester and other big industrial centres, completing the co-operative enquiry and starting the investigation into Trade Unionism. But letters in the faultless handwriting followed me wherever I went, suggesting new sources of information, or telling me of the doings of the Fabians. Occasionally he would forget the "inevitability of gradualness," and there would be a hitch. But he was soon forgiven after due penitence! In the spring of 1891 I sent my newly-found counsellor proofs of my forthcoming book on the Co-operative Movement. "I am disappointed," he wrote with commendable sincerity; "this book ought to have taken six weeks to write, not seven months. Why not let me help you in the

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

investigation into Trade Unionism? Whilst you interview officials and attend Trade Union meetings, I can rush through reports and MS. minutes at the Trade Union offices."

"I am a piece of steel," I warn my friend. "One and one placed close together, in a sufficiently integrated relationship, make not two but eleven," he answered unconcernedly.

I recall another episode. In April 1891 I went to stay with that most loyal of friends—Mrs. J. R. Green—to give a course of lectures (my first experience of this kind) at University Hall on the Co-operative Movement. The day before my first lecture, just as I was leaving my home for London, the post brought me a letter from the editor of *The Times*, asking for an advance report of my first lecture. "How can I write a report of a lecture which I have not yet given?" said I helplessly to the little lady who acted as housekeeper and secretary. "Why not ask Mr. Webb to do it?" was her startling suggestion, made demurely. "Not half a bad idea," said I, in my coldest tone. "Write out a telegram and I will send it," she urged. On arrival I found The Other One chatting with Mrs. Green, whose friendship he had already won. Said he, when we were left alone in the little study, "Give me your syllabus, and just tell me what else you are going to say." An admirable statement of my argument, far more lucid than the lecture itself, duly appeared in *The Times* the next day.

The Lincoln Co-operative Congress of 1891 found us journeying down together. "I cannot tell how things will settle themselves," I write in my diary; "I think probably in his way. His resolute, patient affection, his constant care for my welfare—helping and correcting me—a growing distrust of a self-absorbed life and the egotism of successful work, done on easy terms and reaping more admiration



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

than it deserves—all these feelings are making for our eventual union. Meanwhile father lingers on, and while he lives, nothing can be decided.” [MS. diary, May 1891.] In the course of the summer The Other One and I became definitely but secretly betrothed, my father’s state making disclosure, even to my own family, undesirable. Here are a few entries about my new outlook on life.

We had a queer party at Alice Green’s towards the end of my stay: five of the young Radicals—Asquith, Haldane, Grey, Buxton and Acland—to meet five Fabians—Massingham, Clarke, Olivier, Shaw and S. W., with Alice and myself. It was not successful; though not quite a failure, since all were pleasant and cordial. Asquith spoilt it. He was the ablest of the lot, and determined that it *should not go*. Haldane made himself most pleasant, and is really playing up, but the *machine* of the Liberal Party is slow to move.<sup>1</sup> [MS. diary, May 31, 1891.]

We are both of us [I write in my diary, July 7] second-rate minds; but we are curiously combined. I am the investigator and he the executant; between us we have a wide and varied experience of men and affairs. We have also an unearned salary. These are unique circumstances. A considerable work should be the result if we use our combined talents with a deliberate and persistent purpose.

Since the hurry-scurry of that week [at the Newcastle Trades Union Congress] [I write in the first days of my autumn holiday] I have drudged in offices on records or trudged to interview after interview. The work is stupendous, and as yet, the material does not shape itself. I do little but work and sleep and then work

<sup>1</sup> All the five “young Radicals” became Liberal Cabinet Ministers, and one of them (H. H. Asquith) was for eight critical years Prime Minister; two of the Fabians (Sydney Olivier and Sidney Webb) and one of the Liberals (R. B. Haldane) were members of the first British Labour Cabinet, and Alice Stopford Green is on the roll of the first Senate of the Irish Free State. In the world of to-day the out-shining one of this star company is Bernard Shaw, socialist and dramatist. Only two members of the party are dead (1926)—H. W. Massingham and William Clarke—both of whom achieved distinction in journalism.

## WHY I BECAME A SOCIALIST

again. My fingers, cramped with hours of note-taking, threaten revolt, and my brain whirls with constitutions, executives, general councils, delegate meetings, district delegates, branches, lodges, socials, with objections to piece-work and "subbing," demarcation disputes—until all the organs of my body and faculties of my mind threaten to form into one federated Trade Union and strike against the despotism of the will! Meanwhile there is one bright moment: the clearly written letter precipitated every morning; one half-hour of willing obedience of the cramped fingers when I turn aside from my work and talk with him. And in five days he will be here working by my side. [September 25, 1891.]

I get so sick of these ugly details of time-work and piece-work, overtime and shop-rent, and the squalid misfortunes of defaulting branch officers or heckling by unreasonable members [I write to my Beloved] Who would choose to imprison the intellect in this smelly kitchen of social life if it were not for the ever-present "thirty per cent." [Charles Booth's statistics of those who were below the line of poverty], with the background of the terrible East End streets? The memory of the low, cunning, brutal faces of the loafers and cadgers who hang about the Mint haunts me when I feel inclined to put down the Trade Union reports and take up a bit of good literature.

"You are not fit to write this big book alone [is his answer]; you would never get through it. When I really get to work on it, you will find me not only a help instead of a hindrance—but also *the* indispensable help which will turn a good project into a big book."

A blessed time! He found me utterly worked out with a combination of hard clerk's work and the insufficient food of a pitman's cottage in a miners' village, whither I had gone for *physiognomie*. He took over all the accumulated work, and while I have been lying on a sofa he has been busily abstracting and extracting, amply rewarded, he says, by a few brief intervals of confidential talk over the cigarette and the afternoon cup of tea. With our usual coolness, I have taken a private sitting-room (he staying at another hotel); and he spends the day with me in the capacity of private secretary. The queer little knot of hotel residents are so impressed with the bulk of my correspondence and the long hours of work that I do not think they suspect the intervals of "human nature"; they no doubt think that I keep my amanuensis hard at it all the hours of the day! And

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

now that I am fairly well again, we are driving through the mass of reports fast and well with the blessedness of companionship. Without his help I doubt whether I could get through this bulk of material; I have too little staying power for the bigness of my aims. [MS. diary, October 10, 1891.]

The last evening of the blessed fortnight, and I have sent him ruthlessly to interview the "Good Intent Coopers!" Yesterday evening we spent at a public-house in Newcastle interviewing plumbers; and to-day we have been hard at work on rules and reports. The danger I see ahead is of one-idea'dness, an absorption in this somewhat ugly side of humanity, an absorption which will be made even more absolute by our companionship. It is hard to steer clear between one-idea'dness and futile mental distraction. To-morrow I leave this bleak North Country sea town [Tynemouth]. Each place I leave, where we have worked together, I feel saddened at the thought that a bit of happiness is past and gone. [MS. diary, October 16, 1891.]

On the first of January 1892 my father died; and six months later we were married.

Here ends "My Apprenticeship" and opens "Our Partnership": a working comradeship founded in a common faith and made perfect by marriage; perhaps the most exquisite, certainly the most enduring, of all the varieties of happiness.

## APPENDIX

- (A) PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND STATISTICAL ENQUIRY. (See p. 337 )
- (B) THE METHOD OF THE INTERVIEW. (See p. 387.)
- (C) THE ART OF NOTE-TAKING. (See p. 403.)
- (D) ON THE NATURE OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE. (See p. 340.)
  - (1) MY OBJECTIONS TO A SELF-CONTAINED, SEPARATE, ABSTRACT POLITICAL ECONOMY.
  - (2) A THEORY OF VALUE.
- (E) WHY THE SELF-GOVERNING WORKSHOP HAS FAILED. (See p. 427.)

## APPENDIX

### (A)

#### PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND STATISTICAL ENQUIRY

[MS. dated The Argoed, September 27, 1887, referred to p. 337]

It is a matter of everyday experience that our actions, whether legislative or voluntary, individual or collective, are becoming more and more inspired and guided by descriptions of our social state. For better or for worse we have cast off the yoke of general principles in dealing with social questions—we have abandoned the English theory of *laissez-faire*, with its comfortable doctrines of the sanctity of private ownership and the unmitigated good of free contract and unrestricted competition. We have become pure empiricists, treating each symptom as it appears on the surface of society. And this change has been mainly accomplished by the strong and irrepressible emotion aroused by the narration of facts. A medical report of a specific disease raging in Manchester and other north country towns brought about the first factory legislation of 1802. All the reforms of Lord Shaftesbury and his followers, constituting the principal constructive legislation of the last fifty years, were carried over the heads of political economists and interested opponents through the indignation evoked by detailed accounts of misery and crime. Our whole literature of blue books testifies to the importance attached to the observation and statement of social facts, in the actual making of laws. But it is easy to discern the danger that lies immediately before us. Hitherto sensationalism and special pleading have been more frequent than scientific observation and correct diagnosis. It is a grave misfortune that the representation of social facts has been left almost exclusively to those who are strongly biased in favour of state interference, and that the advocates of *laissez-faire*, instead of seeking justification in social research, have entrenched themselves behind assumptions which are now regarded as unfounded.

What is needed is a body of students who will seek truth for its own sake, with the single-minded desire to present a true picture, and if possible an explanation of social life. And the

## APPENDIX

first step must be to ascertain a method of enquiry which will lead to a verified statement of fact, and which will aid us to break through the outer crust of events and to discover those hidden social forces which we must either submit to or control.

There are two methods open to the student of the present state of society: statistical enquiry and personal observation. Let us clearly understand what we mean by these two expressions. An eminent statistician defines the science of statistics as the "Quantitative observation of aggregates." The simple meaning of this learned expression is this: that statistics are based on the assumption that as far as the question at issue is concerned, all the units dealt with are equal. In the common uses of statistics this assumption is obviously true. In the statistics of population, of births, marriages and deaths, all qualitative difference between one individual and another or between one individual act and another, is not only unimportant, but is entirely irrelevant. Hence in the collection of these statistics we need only mechanical enumeration. For instance, if we could invent a census-taking machine, like the automatic weighing machine, and if we could force the inhabitants to pass over, under or through it, it would serve our purpose quite as well as the most highly trained body of census officials. Anyhow it is needless for the student to undertake the work of enumeration himself; indeed in nearly all instances it would be impossible. He sits at his desk and examines the figures laid before him. Therefore the definition given above is correct: the student of statistics does not observe individuals but aggregates, he does not note qualities but he examines and compares quantities.

By personal observation, or as the Germans prefer to call it, "unit" observation, we understand the examination of individual men, acts or circumstances with a view to discover the specific characteristics that distinguish them from other men, acts and circumstances. Thus the striking difference between unit observation and mechanical enumeration is this, that while mechanical enumeration simply notes the repeated existence of similar units, and could therefore be performed as efficiently by a machine as by a human being, unit observation demands that peculiar power of the human intellect—the discerning and registering of differences. Therefore if learned language be insisted upon, and if we define statistical enquiry as the *quantitative observation of aggregates*, we must define personal observation as the *qualitative observation of units*.

Now in social science, as in all the other sciences of organic

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

life, quantitative and qualitative analysis must go hand in hand. For it is self-evident that in all the more complicated statistics of human life, "unit observation" should be a preliminary step to statistical enquiry. For supposing the student wishes to ascertain not only the sum total of the population, but the proportion which different classes of men bear to one another, it is clear that he must first discover and describe those qualities or circumstances which are the specific characteristics of the classes with which he is dealing. For instance, supposing he wishes to divide the population according to physical temperament, he must first determine the constitutional characteristics which make up the bilious, nervous and sanguine temperaments respectively. And the more extended his personal observation of individuals, the more likely he is to arrive at a classification which will at once include, and separate into definite classes, all the individuals of the population. When he has completed this work of personal observation, he can begin statistical enquiry. To accomplish the work of enumeration he must find men capable of distinguishing and registering the qualities, or group of qualities, which, according to his classification, are characteristic of the different temperaments. Assuming that there be definite and distinct temperaments among men, the correctness of the first step will depend on the student's power of determining salient features and specific characteristics; and the correctness of the second step will depend on the mechanical efficiency of the instrument used in enumeration and on the logical soundness of any manipulation of the figures arrived at. Thus, in all original investigation, the student of social facts must combine personal observation with statistical enquiry. On the one hand he must know and realise distinguishing qualities and peculiar conditions, before he can enumerate the persons possessing these qualities or living within these conditions. On the other hand, in order that his observation may rank as a social fact, he must show that these qualities or conditions are characteristic of a sufficient body of men to form a constituent part of society. To demonstrate this he must use the statistical method: he must enumerate the number of men possessing these characteristics; and if he is to arrive at any generalisation, he must compare this number with other totals—for instance with that of the entire population. Statistical enquiry without personal observation lacks all sure foundation; while personal observation unless followed by statistical enquiry leads to no verified conclusion. The two methods are in reality two equally essential acts in all scientific investigation of the structure and growth of existing societies.

## APPENDIX

Let us turn from a theoretical demonstration of the true method to an illustrative analogue of our *actual* method of social research. Imagine the whole building trade suddenly divided into two rival sets of workmen, the one perfectly understanding the excavating, levelling and forming of foundations, while the other comprised the whole army of bricklayers, stone-masons, plumbers, joiners and glaziers. Supposing these two bodies of men not only refused to work together or to learn each other's trade, but obstinately declared that they were absolutely independent of each other's help; the one body asserting that foundations needed no superstructure, while the other affirmed that buildings required no foundations. Should we advance in the making of cities? Would not all our attempts, however much energy or substance we spent upon them, be reduced to one dead level of unfinished structure and ruined edifice? And yet this is no exaggerated picture of the state of affairs among the observers and recorders of social facts. We have a large body of grave and abstract-minded men who spend their lives or their leisure in the examination of tables of figures; or to use their own expression, in "the marshalling of the figures collected with scientific accuracy and precision." So long as these figures represent so much size and weight and value of dead matter, as in commercial statistics, the foundations upon which a statistician rests his operations are secure. The truth of his conclusion in these instances will depend on correct measurement of the size, weight and value, and on the logic of his train of reasoning. These processes of purely statistical enquiry we may safely leave to the criticism of fellow-statisticians. But when the figures represent, not dead matter, but living men and women of various temperaments and manifold conditions, we need some better assurance than mere assumption that, as far as the question at issue is concerned, these men and women are equal units. I will take an illustration from the work of living statisticians.

Mr. Leone Levi and Mr. Dudley Baxter some years past published estimates of the total income of the working classes, estimates which have since been quoted with approval by Mr. Giffin. And how do you think they arrived at their respective estimates? By multiplying the number of individuals included in the various sections of the working class as stated in the census, by the average wage of a member of each section *when in full work*. For example, if the carpenters numbered 10,000, and if the average wage of a carpenter in full work were 30s., then the total yearly incomings of the carpenters would be £780,000. At this point, however, the two authorities diverged: for Leone



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Levi allowed four weeks, while Dudley Baxter allowed six weeks enforced holiday during the year. What value can we attach to a calculation of the total incomings of the working people which dismisses the burning question of the "unemployed" with a haphazard guess? Surely the evident irritation shown by intelligent working men, at the work of official and semi-official statisticians, is justified by this almost impertinent ignorance of the actual conditions with which they attempt to deal. We may say with Carlyle: "According to the old Proverb, 'as the statist thinks the bell clinks.' Tables are like cobwebs, like the sieve of the Danaides beautifully reticulated, orderly to look upon, but which will hold no conclusion. Tables are abstractions, and the object a most concrete one, so difficult to read the essence of. There are innumerable circumstances, and one circumstance left out may be the vital one on which all turned. Conclusive facts are inseparable from inconclusive except by a head that already understands and knows" As usual, Carlyle has discovered the kernel; it is exactly this absence of personal experience which disfigures the work of the ordinary statistician. Those who are able to examine his basis refuse to believe in the soundness of his conclusions. He fails to present to the public mind a verified statement of fact.

On the other hand every newspaper in the kingdom abounds with the work of those who limit their research to personal observation. Opposed to the grave and abstract-minded statisticians, and intensely antagonistic in their bias, there exist among us a large body of men and women with warm sympathies and quick perceptions, who present to the public striking pictures of society. Death and disease attract more sympathy and excite more feeling than healthy growth; it is not surprising, therefore, that the diseased parts of our society should be selected as the special subjects for study and representation. The fallacy peculiar to the work of this class of student is obvious. In Carlyle's words: "Each man expands his own handbreadth of observation to the limits of the general whole"; more or less each man must take what he himself has seen and ascertained for a sample of all that is seeable and ascertainable! Thus a respectable citizen, who had diligently read East London newspapers on the evil of low-class foreign immigration, writes to his Member of Parliament to enquire whether it be not true that every third man in England is a foreigner! Those who watch the dislocated and decaying life of poverty-stricken London talk of the whole working class as demoralised and unemployed. It is exactly this tendency "to expand the handbreadth of observa-

## APPENDIX

tion to the limits of the general whole," accompanied by the humanitarian's interest in mental and physical misery, which we call *Sensationalism*. There is only one way to check this mischievous tendency. We must apply to these vivid pictures the hard and fast test of statistical enquiry. We must force those who present these striking statements to enumerate exactly the number of persons possessing the characteristics or living within the conditions described, we must compel them to compare this number with that of the whole population. And until the artist consents to bring his picture within a statistical framework, we may admire it as a work of art, but we cannot accept it as a verified statement of fact.

### (B)

#### THE METHOD OF THE INTERVIEW

(See page 387)

IN all sociological investigation of existing social institutions the student finds himself continuously seeking acquaintance with the persons directly concerned with the working of these institutions in order to "interview" them.

There are many uses of the interview. It may be a necessary passport to the inspection of documents and to an opportunity of watching, from the inside, the constitution and activities of some piece of social organisation. For this purpose the requisites are a good "introduction," brevity of statement, a modest and agreeable manner and a ready acquiescence in any arrangement made, however inadequate or inconvenient. Above all, have a clear conception of exactly which documents and what opportunities you are seeking. Do not ask for too much at the first start off; you can always ask for more; and an inch given is better than an ell refused!

But by the *Method of the Interview* I mean an instrument of research and discovery through the process of skilled interrogation. As a device for investigation it is peculiar to the sociologist. It is his compensation for inability to use the chemist's test-tube or the bacteriologist's microscope.

The first condition of the successful use of the interview as an instrument of research is preparedness of the mind of the operator. The interviewer should be himself acquainted, I will not say with all the known facts—that would be to set too high a standard—but with all the data that can be obtained from the ordinary text-books and blue books relating to the subject. For instance,

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

to cross-examine a factory inspector without understanding the distinction between a factory and a workshop, or the meaning of the "particulars clause"; or a Town Clerk without knowing the difference between getting a Provisional Order, promoting a Local Act, or working under a General Act, is an impertinence. Especially important is a familiarity with technical terms and a correct use of them. To start interviewing any specialist without this equipment will not only be waste of time, but may lead to a more or less courteous dismissal, after a few general remarks and some trite opinions; at best, the conversation will be turned away from the subject into the trivialities of social intercourse. For technical terms and technical details, relating to past as well as to present occurrences and controversies, are so many levers to lift into consciousness and expression the more abstruse and out-of-the-way facts or series of facts; and it is exactly these more hidden events that are needed to complete descriptive analysis and to verify hypotheses. I may note in passing that not to have read and mastered what your client has himself published on the question is not easily forgiven!

The second condition is of course that the person interviewed should be in possession of experience or knowledge unknown to you. That is not to say that persons without acknowledged reputations for specialised knowledge must always be ignored; and that there should be no speculative investment in queer or humble folk. It is, for example, almost axiomatic with the experienced investigator that the mind of the subordinate in any organisation will yield richer deposits of fact than the mind of the principal. This is not merely because the subordinate is usually less on his guard, and less severely conventional in his outlook. The essential superiority lies in the circumstance that the working foreman, managing clerk or minor official is in continuous and intimate contact with the day-by-day activities of the organisation; he is more aware of the heterogeneity and changing character of the facts, and less likely to serve up dead generalisation, in which all the living detail becomes a blurred mass, or is stereotyped into rigidly confined and perhaps obsolete categories.

More difficult to convey to the student is the right manner or behaviour in interviewing.

Regarded as a method of investigation the process of interviewing is a particular form of psycho-analysis. From within the consciousness or subconsciousness of another mind, the practitioner has to ferret out memories of past experiences—"orders of thought" corresponding with "orders of things."

## APPENDIX

You may easily inhibit free communication, or prevent the rise to consciousness of significant facts, by arousing suspicion. For instance, whilst a careful plan of examination should be prepared, no paper of questions should be apparent: and no attempt should be made to take notes during the interview. Except in cases in which your client is not merely according an interview but is consciously co-operating in your investigation, it is a mistake to bring a secretary or other colleague: caution is increased when a man perceives that his words are being "witnessed."

It is disastrous to "show off," or to argue: the client must be permitted to pour out his fictitious tales, to develop his preposterous theories, to use the silliest arguments, without demur or expression of dissent or ridicule. The competent social investigator will not look bored or indifferent when irrelevant information or trivial details are offered him, any more than a competent medical practitioner will appear wearied by his patient's catalogue of imaginary symptoms. Accept whatever is offered: a personally conducted visit to this or that works or institution may be a dismal prospect; it may even seem waste effort to inspect machinery or plant which cannot be understood, or which has been seen *ad nauseam* before, or which is wholly irrelevant to the subject-matter of the enquiry. But it is a mistake to decline. In the course of these tiring walks and weary waitings, experiences may be recalled or elicited which would not have cropped up in the formal interview in the office. Indeed, the less formal the conditions of the interview the better. The atmosphere of the dinner-table or the smoking-room is a better "conductor" than that of the office during business hours. The best of these occasions is that you can sometimes start several experts arguing among themselves; and in this way you will pick up more information in one hour than you will acquire during a whole day in a series of interviews.

When you have got upon confidential terms, your new friend may cite private statistics or mention confidential documents; this should be met by an off-hand plea for permission to see them. If a direct offer be made to produce and explain documents, the interviewer has scored a notable success and should follow it up on the spot. "I am dreadfully slow and inaccurate at figures: I wonder whether I and my secretary might come here to-morrow to look through these reports again?" will often find good-natured acquiescence.

Bear in mind that it is desirable to make the interview pleasing to the persons interviewed. It should seem to him or her an agreeable form of social intercourse. I remember, in one of

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

my early adventures in "wholesale interviewing" with a whole party, even telling fortunes from their hands, with all sorts of interesting results! Without this atmosphere of relaxation, of amused interest on both sides, it will often be impracticable to get at those intimate details of daily experience which are the most valuable data of the sociologist. Hence a spirit of adventure, a delight in watching human beings as human beings quite apart from what you can get out of their minds, an enjoyment of the play of your own personality with that of another, are gifts of rare value in the art of interviewing; and gifts which are, I think, more characteristic of the woman than the man.

I need hardly add that once the interview is over, the first opportunity should be taken to write out fully every separate fact or hypothesis elicited. Never trust your memory a moment longer than is necessary is an all-important maxim. Practice will make it easy to reproduce on paper, that very evening or on the following morning before starting out for the day's work, every phrase or suggestion that needs to be recorded, even of several successive interviews.

### (C)

## THE ART OF NOTE-TAKING

(See page 403)

It is difficult to persuade the accomplished graduate of Oxford or Cambridge that an indispensable instrument in the technique of sociological enquiry—seeing that without it any of the methods of acquiring facts can seldom be used effectively—is the making of notes, or what the French call "*fiches*."<sup>1</sup> For a highly

<sup>1</sup> The art of note-taking has been recognised by German and French historians alike as necessary to the scientific historian. "Every one agrees nowadays," observe the most noted French writers on the study of history, "that it is advisable to collect materials on separate cards or slips of paper. . . . The advantages of this artifice are obvious; the detachability of the slips enables us to group them at will in a host of different combinations; if necessary, to change their places; it is easy to bring texts of the same kind together, and to incorporate additions, as they are acquired, in the interior of the groups to which they belong" (*Introduction to the Study of History*, by Charles Langlois and Charles Seignobos, translated by C. G. Berry, 1898, p. 103). "If what is in question," states the most learned German methodologist, "is a many-sided subject, such as a history of a people

## APPENDIX

elaborated and skilled process of "making notes," besides its obvious use in recording observations which would otherwise be forgotten, is actually an instrument of discovery. This process serves a similar purpose in sociology to that of the blow-pipe and the balance in chemistry, or the prism and the electroscope in physics. That is to say, it enables the scientific worker to break up his subject-matter, so as to isolate and examine at his leisure its various component parts, and to recombine them in new and experimental groupings in order to discover which sequences of events have a causal significance. To put it paradoxically, by exercising your reason on the separate facts displayed, in an appropriate way, on hundreds, perhaps thousands, of separate pieces of paper, you may discover which of a series of hypotheses best explains the process underlying the rise, growth, change or decay of a given social institution, or the character of the actions and reactions of different elements of a given social environment. The truth of one of the hypotheses may be proved, by significant correspondences and differences, to be the order of thought that most closely corresponds with the order of things.

The simplest and most direct way of bringing home to the reader the truth of this dogmatic assertion of the scientific value of note-taking in sociological investigation will be first to describe the technique, and then to point out its uses. Now, it may seem a trivial matter, but the first item in the recipe for scientific note-taking is that the student must be provided, not with a notebook of any sort or kind, but with an indefinite number of separate sheets of paper of identical shape and size (I have found large quarto the most convenient form), and of sufficient good quality for either pen or typewriter. The reason why detached sheets must be employed, instead of any book, is, as I shall presently demonstrate, the absolute necessity of being able to rearrange the notes in different order; in fact, to be able to shuffle and re-shuffle them indefinitely, and to change the classification of the facts recorded on them, according to the various hypotheses with which you will need to compare these facts. Another reason against the notebook is that notes recorded in a book must

or a great organisation, the several sheets of notes must be so arranged that for each aspect of the subject the material can be surveyed as a whole. With any considerable work the notes must be taken upon separate loose sheets, which can easily be arranged in different orders, and among which sheets with new dates can be interpolated without difficulty" (*Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*, by Bernheim, 1908, p. 555).

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

necessarily be entered in the order in which they are obtained ; and it is vitally important to be set free from the particular category in which you have found any particular set of facts, whether of time or place, sequence or co-existence. In sociology, as in mineralogy, "conglomerates" have always to be broken up, and the ingredients separately dealt with.

Upon the separate sheets should be clearly written, so that other persons can read them, and according to a carefully devised system, with as much precision as possible, and in sufficient detail, a statement of each of the facts, or assumed facts, whether the knowledge of them has been acquired by personal observation, by the use of documents, by the perusal of literature, by the formal taking of evidence, by the interview, or by the statistical method, or in any other way. A good deal of the ease and rapidity of the investigation, and no small part of its fruitfulness and success, will depend on the way in which the notes are—to use a printer's word—displayed ; and our experience suggests the following rules.

On each sheet of paper there should appear one date, and one only ; one place, and one only ; one source of information, and one only. Less easy of exact application, because less definite, and more dependent on the form of the provisional breaking-up and classification of the facts, is the rule that only one subject, or one category of facts, even only a single fact, should be recorded on each sheet. Of almost equal importance with this primary axiom of "one sheet one subject-matter"—we may almost say "one sheet one event in time and space"—is the manner in which the fact is "displayed" on the paper. Here what is of importance is identity of plan among all the hundreds, or even thousands, of notes. The date (in the history of institutions usually the year suffices) should always appear in the same place on all the sheets—say, at the right-hand top corner of the paper ; and the source of information, or authority for the statement, in the left-hand margin. The centre of the sheet will be occupied by the text of the note, that is, the main statement or description of the fact recorded, whether it be a personal observation of your own, an extract from a document, a quotation from some literary source, an answer given in evidence, or a statistical calculation or table of figures. Some of the sheets may record suggested hypotheses, for subsequent comparison with the facts ; or even a "general impression," or a summary of a group of facts, given in addition to a note of each of the facts themselves. On what part of the sheet to write the name of the place at which the event occurred, and the various headings and sub-headings

## APPENDIX

to be added by way of classification, constitutes the central puzzle-question with which the sociological investigator is confronted in devising the system for his note-taking. This cannot be definitely determined, in any elaborate or extensive investigation, except in conjunction with the principal classification or the successive classification that may be adopted during the enquiry. Assuming that the investigation is concerned with all the social institutions of one place, and with no other places, the name of the place can, of course, be taken for granted, and not recorded on the innumerable sheets (except in so far as it may be necessary for the convenience of other persons using the same notes, when it may be given by the use of an india-rubber stamp once for all). In such an investigation the principal heading, to be placed in the centre of the top of the sheet, may be the name or title of the particular institution to which the note relates, whilst the sub-heading (which can be best put immediately under the date on the right-hand side) may denote the particular aspect of the institution dealt with, whether it be, for instance, some feature of its constitutional structure, or some incident of its activities. If, on the other hand, the investigation is concerned with social institutions in different places, the name of the place at which each event takes place becomes an essential item of the record, and it should be placed in a prominent position, either in the centre of the page at the top, or as the first sub-heading on the right-hand side beneath the date. The one consideration to be constantly kept in view, in this preliminary task of deciding how to record facts that constitute the subject-matter of the enquiry, is so to place the different items of the record—the what, the where, the when, and the classification or relationship—that in glancing rapidly through a number of sheets the eye catches automatically each of these aspects of the facts. Thus, a carefully planned “display,” and, above all, identity of arrangement, greatly facilitate the shuffling and reshuffling of the sheets, according as it is desired to bring the facts under review in an arrangement according to place, time or any other grouping. It is, indeed, not too much to say that this merely mechanical perfection of note-taking may become an instrument of actual discovery.

“What is the use of this pedantic method of note-taking involving masses of paper and a lot of hard thinking, not to mention the shuffling and reshuffling, which is apparently the final cause of this intolerable elaboration?” will be asked by the post-graduate student eager to publish an epoch-making treatise on the *History of Government*, or, perchance, on the *History of*



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

*Freedom*, within the two years he has allotted to the taking of his doctorate. The only answer I can give is to cite our own experience.

The "Webb speciality" has been a study, at once historical and analytic, of the life-history of particular forms of social organisation within the United Kingdom, such as the Trade Union and Co-operative movements, and English local government from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. In these successive tasks we have been confronted, not with the constitution and activities of one organisation, in one particular year, in one part of the Kingdom; but with a multiplicity of organisations, belonging, it is true, to the same genus or species, but arising, flourishing and disappearing in diverse social environments, at different intervals throughout a considerable period of time, exhibiting a great variety of constitutions and functions, subject to successive waves of thought and emotion, and developing relations with other institutions or organisations within the British and in some cases within the world community. The task before us was to discover, for instance, in the tangled and complicated undergrowth of English local government, the recurrent uniformities in constitution and activities showing the main lines of development, together with the varieties in structure and function arising in particular places, in particular decades, or within peculiar social environments; some to survive and multiply, others to decay and disappear. The main sources of our information were, as it happens, records and persons located in the cities and villages of England and Wales, sources which, for reasons of time and expense, had each to be exhausted in one visit. But even if all this mass of MSS. and printed records, and the hundreds of separate individuals concerned, had been continuously at our disposal, whenever we cared to consult them, it would still have been desirable to adopt a method of note-taking which would allow of a mechanical breaking-up of the conglomerate of facts yielded by particular documents, interviews and observations, in order to reassemble them in a new order revealing causal sequences, and capable of literary expression. The simplest (and usually the least fertile) way of expressing the results of an investigation is to follow the strictly chronological order in which the events occur, not according to their causal connections with other events, but exclusively according to the dates of their happening. But even for this narrow purpose the conglomerate notebook is an impossible instrument<sup>1</sup> unless

<sup>1</sup> An instance may be given of the necessity of the "separate sheet" system. Among the many sources of information from

## APPENDIX

the subject-matter happens to be the life-history of a single organisation, the data for which are all to be found in one document, and are themselves given in that document in strictly chronological order. In our investigations, dealing as they did with the life-history of hundreds of separate organisations, the data for which were to be found in innumerable separate documents, pamphlets, newspapers or books, or were discovered in many observations and interviews, the conglomerate notebook system would have involved disentangling and rewriting from all the separate notebooks, every note relating to a particular year. By adopting our method of one sheet for one subject, one place and one date, all the sheets could be rapidly reshuffled in chronological order; and the whole of our material might have been surveyed and summarised exclusively from the standpoint of chronology. But, as a matter of fact, we had to use the facts gathered from all these sources, not for one purpose only, but for many purposes: for describing changes in the constitutional form, or the increase or variation in the activities of the organisation; or the localisation of particular constitutions or activities in particular areas, or the connection of any of these groups of facts with other groups of facts. By the method of note-taking that I have described, it was practicable to sort out all our thousands of separate pieces of paper according to any, or successively according to all, of these categories or combination of categories, so that we could see, almost at a glance, to what extent the thousands of vestries which served as local authorities in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were entangled in the court leet structure; in what particular year they began to apply

which we constructed our book *The Manor and the Borough* were the hundreds of reports on particular boroughs made by the Municipal Corporation Commissioners in 1835. These four huge volumes are well arranged and very fully indexed; they were in our own possession; we had read them through more than once; and we had repeatedly consulted them on particular points. We had, in fact, used them as if they had been our own bound notebooks, thinking that this would suffice. But, in the end, we found ourselves quite unable to digest and utilise this material until we had written out every one of the innumerable facts on a separate sheet of paper, so as to allow of the mechanical absorption of these sheets among our other notes; of their complete assortment by subjects, and of their being shuffled and reshuffled to test hypotheses as to suggested co-existences and sequences.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

for Acts of Parliament closing or opening their constitutions; whether this constitutional development was equally characteristic of the statutory bodies of commissioners set up during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the early part of the nineteenth century; whether, when and why exactly the referendum and initiative were introduced and for what purpose; or at what stage of development and under what set of conditions all these authorities ceased to rely on the obligatory services of citizens and began to employ persons at wages. Or to take an example from our investigations into Trade Unionism. It was only by arranging and rearranging our separate sheets of paper that we could ascertain how far piece-work, or the objection to piece-work, was characteristic of a particular kind of industry, or of a particular type of Trade Union, or of a particular district of the United Kingdom, or of a particular stage of development in the organisation concerned or of the movement as a whole. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in all our work we have found this process of reshuffling the sheets, and reassembling them on our work-table according to different categories, or in different sequences—a process entirely dependent on the method of note-taking—by far the most fertile stage of our investigation. Not once, but frequently has the general impression with regard to the causal sequence of events, with which we had started our enquiry, or which had arisen spontaneously during the examination of documents, the taking of evidence or the observation of the working of an organisation, been seriously modified, or completely reversed, when we have been simultaneously confronted by all the separate notes relating to the point at issue. On many occasions we have been compelled to break off the writing of a particular chapter, or even of a particular paragraph, in order to test, by reshuffling the whole of our notes dealing with a particular subject, a particular place, a particular organisation or a particular date, the relative validity of hypotheses as to cause and effect. I may remark, parenthetically, that we have found this “game with reality,” this building up of one hypothesis and knocking it down in favour of others that had been revealed or verified by a new shuffle of the notes—especially when we severally “backed” rival hypotheses—a most stimulating recreation! In that way alone have we been able “to put our bias out of gear,” and to make our order of thought correspond, not with our own prepossessions, but with the order of things discovered by our investigations.

I realise how difficult it is to convince students—especially those with a “literary” rather than a “scientific” training—that

## APPENDIX

it is by just this use of such a mechanical device as the shuffling of sheets of notes, and just at this stage, that the process of investigation often becomes fertile in actual discoveries. Most students seem to assume that it is the previous stage of making observations and taking notes which is that of discovery. I can only speak from our own experience, of which I will give two examples. When we had actually completed and published our *History of Trade Unionism* (1894), after three or four years' collection of facts from all industries in all parts of the kingdom, which we had arranged more or less chronologically, we found to our surprise that we had no systematic and definite theory or vision of how Trade Unionism operated, or what it effected. It was not until we had completely re-sorted all our innumerable sheets of paper according to subjects, thus bringing together all the facts relating to each, whatever the trade concerned, or the place or the date—and had shuffled and reshuffled these sheets according to various tentative hypotheses—that a clear, comprehensive and verifiable theory of the working and results of Trade Unionism emerged in our minds; to be embodied, after further researches by way of verification, in our *Industrial Democracy* (1897).

A further instance occurred in connection with my work on the Poor Law Commission. It had been commonly assumed on all sides that the Local Government Board and its predecessors had continued throughout to administer the "principles of 1834." On my insisting upon an actual examination of the policy pursued through the seventy years, I was deputed by the Commission to examine and report what had actually been the policy. This involved the examination of every manifestation of policy, such as the successive statutes, general orders, special orders, circulars, etc., numbering in all some thousands. These were all analysed by subjects, on separate sheets of paper, under my direction. To these data was added an analysis of the letters of the Local Government Board, from 1835 to 1907, addressed to a dozen of the principal Boards of Guardians (an analysis made by permission of these authorities from their letter-books), as well as their records of the inspectors' verbal decisions and advice to guardians. When the task was completed, neither the able assistants who had done the work, nor I who had directed it, had the least idea what the policy on each subject had been at each period. It was not until the sheets had been sorted out, first according to subjects, and then according to date, that the fact and the nature of a continuous but gradual evolution of policy could be detected, differing from class to class of paupers; until,

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

for Acts of Parliament closing or opening their constitutions; whether this constitutional development was equally characteristic of the statutory bodies of commissioners set up during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the early part of the nineteenth century; whether, when and why exactly the referendum and initiative were introduced and for what purpose; or at what stage of development and under what set of conditions all these authorities ceased to rely on the obligatory services of citizens and began to employ persons at wages. Or to take an example from our investigations into Trade Unionism. It was only by arranging and rearranging our separate sheets of paper that we could ascertain how far piece-work, or the objection to piece-work, was characteristic of a particular kind of industry, or of a particular type of Trade Union, or of a particular district of the United Kingdom, or of a particular stage of development in the organisation concerned or of the movement as a whole. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in all our work we have found this process of reshuffling the sheets, and reassembling them on our work-table according to different categories, or in different sequences—a process entirely dependent on the method of note-taking—by far the most fertile stage of our investigation. Not once, but frequently has the general impression with regard to the causal sequence of events, with which we had started our enquiry, or which had arisen spontaneously during the examination of documents, the taking of evidence or the observation of the working of an organisation, been seriously modified, or completely reversed, when we have been simultaneously confronted by all the separate notes relating to the point at issue. On many occasions we have been compelled to break off the writing of a particular chapter, or even of a particular paragraph, in order to test, by reshuffling the whole of our notes dealing with a particular subject, a particular place, a particular organisation or a particular date, the relative validity of hypotheses as to cause and effect. I may remark, parenthetically, that we have found this “game with reality,” this building up of one hypothesis and knocking it down in favour of others that had been revealed or verified by a new shuffle of the notes—especially when we severally “backed” rival hypotheses—a most stimulating recreation! In that way alone have we been able “to put our bias out of gear,” and to make our order of thought correspond, not with our own prepossessions, but with the order of things discovered by our investigations.

I realise how difficult it is to convince students—especially those with a “literary” rather than a “scientific” training—that

## APPENDIX

it is by just this use of such a mechanical device as the shuffling of sheets of notes, and just at this stage, that the process of investigation often becomes fertile in actual discoveries. Most students seem to assume that it is the previous stage of making observations and taking notes which is that of discovery. I can only speak from our own experience, of which I will give two examples. When we had actually completed and published our *History of Trade Unionism* (1894), after three or four years' collection of facts from all industries in all parts of the kingdom, which we had arranged more or less chronologically, we found to our surprise that we had no systematic and definite theory or vision of how Trade Unionism operated, or what it effected. It was not until we had completely re-sorted all our innumerable sheets of paper according to subjects, thus bringing together all the facts relating to each, whatever the trade concerned, or the place or the date—and had shuffled and reshuffled these sheets according to various tentative hypotheses—that a clear, comprehensive and verifiable theory of the working and results of Trade Unionism emerged in our minds; to be embodied, after further researches by way of verification, in our *Industrial Democracy* (1897).

A further instance occurred in connection with my work on the Poor Law Commission. It had been commonly assumed on all sides that the Local Government Board and its predecessors had continued throughout to administer the "principles of 1834." On my insisting upon an actual examination of the policy pursued through the seventy years, I was deputed by the Commission to examine and report what had actually been the policy. This involved the examination of every manifestation of policy, such as the successive statutes, general orders, special orders, circulars, etc., numbering in all some thousands. These were all analysed by subjects, on separate sheets of paper, under my direction. To these data was added an analysis of the letters of the Local Government Board, from 1835 to 1907, addressed to a dozen of the principal Boards of Guardians (an analysis made by permission of these authorities from their letter-books), as well as their records of the inspectors' verbal decisions and advice to guardians. When the task was completed, neither the able assistants who had done the work, nor I who had directed it, had the least idea what the policy on each subject had been at each period. It was not until the sheets had been sorted out, first according to subjects, and then according to date, that the fact and the nature of a continuous but gradual evolution of policy could be detected, differing from class to class of paupers; until,

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

in 1907, each class had come to be dealt with according to principles which were obviously very different from those of 1834. The report of this investigation was presented to the Poor Law Commission, with the interesting result that we heard no more of the "principles of 1834!" It was subsequently published as *English Poor Law Policy* (1910).

I append two samples of our sheets of notes; one recording an interview, and the other an extract from an official document.

### (D)

#### ON THE NATURE OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE

THE following notes on the Nature of Economic Science and on the Theory of Value at once summarise and extend the arguments which I imperfectly expressed in the essays referred to at p. 340.

##### (I) MY OBJECTIONS TO A SELF-CONTAINED, SEPARATE, ABSTRACT POLITICAL ECONOMY

I see few advantages, and many disadvantages, in collecting together all the activities concerned with the production and consumption of wealth, in all the various stages of social evolution, and in all the different varieties of social organisation by which this function is performed; and in making this object or purpose the subject of a self-contained science styled Political Economy, apart from the study of human behaviour in society—that is to say, of social institutions, or Sociology. The implied claim of the orthodox or Ricardian economics to constitute such a science of wealth production in general has already been assailed by a competent authority. "The science of Political Economy," sums up that lucid and ingenious thinker, Walter Bagehot, "may be defined as the science of business, *such as business is in large productive and trading communities*. It is an analysis of that world so familiar to many Englishmen—the 'great commerce' by which England has become rich. It assumes the principal facts which make that commerce possible, and as is the way of an abstract science it isolates and simplifies them; it detaches them from the confusion with which they are mixed in fact" [*Economic Studies*, by Walter Bagehot, 1888, p. 5]. Bagehot had in mind what economic students are apt to forget, namely, that "big business" of the nineteenth-century type, which Ricardo was considering, is not the only form of wealth production; and is, in fact, in marked contrast with other forms

## APPENDIX

such as chattel slavery, tribal ownership, peasant agriculture, the manorial system, independent handicrafts, domestic manufactures, and what not. Even to-day there are in the world other social institutions, besides profit-making capitalistic business, which produce no small amount of "wealth" even in the narrowest sense of the term. For instance, there are, in the twentieth century, state forests and mines, banks and post offices, steamship lines and railways; and municipal departments of gas and electricity, tramways and docks, dwelling-houses and restaurants. I need not again describe the Consumers' Co-operative Movement, with its multifarious industrial enterprises carried on without the incentive of profit-making. Thus the Ricardian economics—if Bagehot's justification of its validity has any authority—has no right to the position of the science of wealth production. Political Economy, as professed and taught, deals with only one of many social institutions engaged in or concerned with wealth production; and it is misleading to ignore those other social institutions by which wealth has been, and is now being produced among hundreds of millions of people unacquainted with the "big business" or profit-making capitalism, for which Ricardo sought to formulate the "laws" that his successors have been, during the past century, so diligently refining and elaborating.

Why not drop, once and for all, the whole notion of a science of Political Economy? The term itself is a foolish one, which confuses the political with the industrial organisation of the community. Even when the modern term Economics is substituted, the "science" inherits a misleading delimitation of content and a faulty method of reasoning. What needs to be studied are social institutions themselves, as they actually exist or have existed, whatever may be the motive attributed to the men and women concerned; and whatever may be the assumed object or purpose with which these institutions are established or maintained. The organisation of "big business," or profit-making capitalism, is, at the present time, one of the most important of social institutions; and it deserves a whole study to itself, which may or may not yet warrant the name of a science, but for which an appropriate description should be found. This study of profit-making capitalism or modern business organisation would take its place alongside the separate studies of other social institutions, such as the family; consumers' co-operation; the vocational organisations of the various kinds of producers; local government; the state (or political organisation); international relations; the intellectual, æsthetic and religious



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

interests of man, and possibly a host of other departments of what can only be regarded (and may one day be unified) as Sociology.

And this change of the definition or sphere of what is now termed Economics or Political Economy—which Hearn, it may be remembered, wished to call Plutology—would to-day be as much to the advantage of profit-making capitalism as it would be to the advancement of truth. It would almost necessarily involve the abandonment of the abstract, or purely deductive method, without the possibility of precise verification of its inferences, which Ricardo's authority imposed on successive generations of British economists. Now one of the many mischievous results of the abstract and deductive method has been the underlying assumption, used as a premise for its deductive reasoning, that pecuniary self-interest is, in fact, the basis of modern business enterprise, all else being ignored as merely "friction." Thus it is assumed that all the activities of profit-makers are inspired solely and exclusively by pecuniary self-interest. This is, to my thinking, to do them injustice. Public spirit and personal vanity, delight in technical efficiency and desire for power, political and social ambition, the spirit of adventure and scientific curiosity, not to mention parental love and pride of family, and even racial prestige, all contribute to the make-up of the dominant personalities of the business world. Whether competitive profit-making or capitalism promotes greed and oppression, and depresses public spirit—like the analogous accusations that State employment favours slackness and lessens initiative, and that vocational organisation furthers exclusiveness and stale technique—are all alike questions to be investigated. "By their fruits ye shall know them"—I would add, more especially by the spiritual fruits, *i.e.* by the characteristic state of mind which any particular institution brings about in the individual, and in the community, the character which it produces, as manifested in the conduct of individuals and organisations. I believe that we have here a most fruitful field for enquiry. We might discover that each type of organisation (or absence of organisation), each social institution, has its own peculiar "social diseases," which will lead to senility or death unless arrested—arrested, possibly, by the presence or the development of another and complementary social institution.

Assuming that we give up the conception of a separate abstract science of Political Economy or Economics, the adjective "economic" might then be reserved to define the relations between men arising out of their means of livelihood or sub-

## APPENDIX

sistence; or, to put it in another way, which can be weighed and measured in terms of money—whatever may be the social institution in which these relations occur; exactly as we use the terms racial, political, legal, sporting or sexual, to describe the types of relationships having other objects or ends. Thus we should have the economics of art, or of sport, or of marriage, or of medicine, as the case might be, just as we have the legal aspects of business enterprise, of the family or of municipal government.

A necessary implication of this new classification would be that what would have to be investigated, described and analysed are the social institutions themselves, as they exist or have existed, not any assumed "laws," unchanging and ubiquitous, comparable with the law of gravity, any failure of correspondence with the facts being dismissed as friction. A second corollary is that these social institutions, like other organic structure, have to be studied, not in any assumed perfection of development, but in all the changing phases of growing social tissue, from embryo to corpse, in health and perversion, in short, as the birth, growth, disease and death of actual social relationships. And their diseases may even be the most interesting part of the study!

Let us explore some of the advantages to be gained by this new departure. For instance, confronted with the accumulation of demoralised labour in our big towns, and notably at the dock gates, the mechanistic doctrines of the orthodox economists are waste words. The so-called "economic law" "that labour goes where it is best paid," one of the many deductions from the metaphysical theory that all men follow their pecuniary self-interest, is here glaringly falsified by events. Labour in this case goes where it is worst paid, and remains there. Can we discover the sequence which leads to this state of affairs? Taking the class of casual labourers as a whole, we observe that their economic faculty is intermittent, and that the majority of these individuals have always been, or have become, mentally or physically unfit for persistent work. We can even watch the process by which a countryman habituated to steady and continuous work at regular wages becomes, under given conditions, the under-employed, and eventually the unemployable worker. The attractions of the big towns are obvious. The distributive trades, and the industries of construction, offer more odd jobs and more short jobs than the manufacturing or mining industries; the metropolitan life yields greater amusement for leisure hours than the life of the countryside or manufacturing town.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

The existence of this particular leisure class may be summed up in the seemingly paradoxical statement: the difficulty of living by regular work and the ease of living without it! And I doubt whether those who, either by birth or temperament, belong to, or through circumstances have drifted into, this class of casual labourers suffer much discontent with their condition. For their economic desire, besides being inefficient, has sunk to the lowest level of *subjective* quality. In spite of physical misery, they prefer a leisurely life, in the midst of the debased excitements of a big town, to a working life with comparative comfort under monotonous conditions. They enjoy to the full a social intercourse unshackled by moral conventions and unrestrained by the public opinion of a small community—but (unlike the social life of the analogous class in “good society”) inspired by a most genuine spirit of warm-hearted generosity. They are an attractive people, with all the charms of a leisurely and cosmopolitan view of life, free from intellectual and moral prejudices and as different from the true working class as are the individuals who compose the leisure classes of “London Society” from the professional classes in London and from the higher middle class of our provincial towns. But they are essentially parasitic, and like other parasitic growths, they tend to reduce the substance they feed on to their own condition.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed description of the behaviour of the lowest class of casual labourers is given in my subsequent article on “The Docks.”

“These men hang about for the ‘odd hour’ work or one day in the seven. They live on stimulants and tobacco, varied with bread and tea and salt fish. Their passion is gambling. Sections of them are hereditary casuals; a larger portion drift from other trades. They have a constitutional hatred to regularity and forethought, and a need for paltry excitement. They are late risers, sharp-witted talkers, and, above all, they have that agreeable tolerance for their own and each other’s vices which seems characteristic of a purely leisure class, whether it lies at the top or the bottom of society. But if we compare them with their brothers and sisters in the London Club and West-end drawing-room we must admit that in one respect they are strikingly superior. The stern reality of ever-pressing starvation draws all together. Communism is a necessity of their life: they share all with one another, and as a class they are quixotically generous. It is this virtue and the courage with which they face privation that lend a charm to life among them” (Charles

## APPENDIX

To sum up: Unused economic faculty rapidly deteriorates into the intermittent state—and efficient economic desire, if satisfied without the obligation to produce, quickly becomes parasitic—a conclusion which I had failed to reach from the abstract economics of Ricardo and Marshall.

My subsequent enquiry into the low wages, long and irregular hours and insanitary conditions of the slop-clothing trade of East London (published in 1888) revealed an analogous correspondence between a low type of economic faculty on the one hand, and, on the other, poverty-stricken economic desire; resulting in the production and use of the “balloon coat” and “soaped-up trousers,” commodities as hideous in appearance as they were wasteful in wear. As the extreme contrast to this specially ignominious correlation of low faculty and low desire, with its ugly offspring of slop-clothing, let us look back on the mediæval cathedral, the outcome of a combination of the faculties of the anonymous God-intoxicated designer, leading his groups of craftsmen, individually enthusiastic in the execution of their manual arts, with the effective desire for a House of God on the part of successive pious founders and the undoubting community, which was then the congregation of the faithful. As a contemporary, and a more complicated, contrast with the sweater’s workshop we may visualise the scientifically efficient factory of the American business combine, organised by experts paid princely salaries, affording regular employment at good wages, relatively short hours of work, hygienic conditions and “welfare” institutions for a mass of carefully graded employees—accompanied, it is true, by hierarchical discipline and arbitrary promotion and dismissal, the monotony of endless repetition work in extreme subdivision of labour—producing in enormous quantities standardised commodities of respectable quality and undeniable utility, whether “packet foods,” gramophones, motor-cars or munitions of war, all accurately designed to satisfy, in the main, merely the animal instincts of self-preservation, the desire for common pleasures, and the greed for power.

The keenness with which I was following up this conception of economics as the study of the economic *behaviour* of particular individuals and classes led me to discover one notable exception to the rule, under the conditions of labour at the East End of London, of progressive deterioration of the wage-earners. alike

Booth’s *Life and Labour of the People*, Final Edition (1902). Poverty Series, vol. 4, chapter on The Docks, by Beatrice Potter, pp. 31-2).

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

in their production and their consumption of commodities. In the chapters on the East End Tailoring Trade and on the Jewish Community, contributed to Charles Booth's first volume (published in 1889), I thus describe the exceptional characteristics of the immigrant Jew.

"In the East End tailoring trade the characteristic *love of profit* in the Jewish race has a twofold tendency; to raise the workers as individuals, and to depress the industry through which they rise. Contractors and workers alike ascend in the social scale; taken as a whole they shift upwards, leaving to the new-comer from foreign lands the worst-paid work, the most dilapidated workshop and the dirtiest lodgings."<sup>1</sup>

"As an industrial competitor [I write in my subsequent chapter on the Jewish Community in the same volume] the Polish Jew is fettered by no definite standard of life; it rises and falls with his opportunities; he is not depressed by penury, and he is not demoralised by gain. As a citizen of our many-sided metropolis he is unmoved by those gusts of passion which lead to drunkenness and crime; whilst, on the other hand, he pursues the main purposes of personal existence, undistracted by the humours, illusions and aspirations arising from the unsatisfied emotions of our more complicated and less disciplined natures. Is it surprising, therefore, that in this nineteenth century, with its ideal of physical health, intellectual acquisition, and material prosperity, the chosen people, with three thousand years of training, should in some instances realise the promise made by Moses to their forefathers: 'Thou shalt drive out nations mightier than thyself, and thou shalt take their land as an inheritance?' "<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People*, Final Edition (1902), Poverty Series, vol. 4, chapter III., on The Tailoring Trade, by Beatrice Potter, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Booth's Final Edition (1902), Poverty Series, vol. 3, chapter on The Jewish Community East London, by Beatrice Potter, reprinted in *Problems of Modern Industry*, by S. and B. Webb (1898), pp. 43-4.

The train of thought arising from this conception of economics as to the study of different types of economic behaviour finds expression in a note to *Industrial Democracy* (1897), by S. and B. Webb, pp. 697-8:

"We are unable here to do more than refer to the existence of these popular ideas as to the standard of life. How they originate—why, for instance, the English workman should

## APPENDIX

### (2) A THEORY OF VALUE

My brooding over the Theory of Value led me to the conception that value arises in the satisfaction of a desire by the exercise of a faculty. In "value in use," this union of exercise and satisfaction may take place in one individual, as in the man eating the food which he has produced; in "exchange-value" the union necessarily involves a relation between two or more individuals.

Price is simply the expression in terms of money of the equation at which a given faculty and a given desire, under given conditions, consent to unite and generate exchange value: it is, so to speak, the marriage settlement of economic life, and like many other matrimonial arrangements it is not always to the advantage of both parties. And moreover, in this vale of tears many faculties and many desires do, as a matter of fact, remain unmarried; and thus fail to generate exchange value. Indeed, it should be one of the main objects of applied sociology to bring about the largest measure of unbroken continuity and mutual satisfaction in an ever-increasing stream of marriages

always have insisted on eating costly and unnutritious wheaten bread, or why some classes or races display so much more stubbornness of standard than others, would be a fruitful subject for economic enquiry. We suggest, as a hypothetical classification by way of starting-point, that the races and classes of wage-earners seem to divide themselves into three groups. There are those who, like the Anglo-Saxon skilled artisan, will not work below a customary minimum standard of life, but who have no maximum; that is to say, they will be stimulated to intenser effort and new wants by every increase of income. There are races who, like the African negro, have no assignable minimum, but a very low maximum; they will work, that is, for indefinitely low wages, but cannot be induced to work at all once their primitive wants are satisfied. Finally, there is the Jew, who, as we think, is unique in possessing neither a maximum nor a minimum; he will accept the lowest terms rather than remain out of employment; as he rises in the world new wants stimulate him to increased intensity of effort, and no amount of income causes him to slacken his indefatigable activity. To this remarkable elasticity in the standard of life is, we suggest, to be attributed both the wealth and the poverty of the Jews—the striking fact that their wage-earning class is permanently the poorest in all Europe, whilst individual Jews are the wealthiest men of their respective countries."

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

between the economic faculties and economic desires of the human race.

Now Karl Marx and his disciples, following Thompson, Hodgskin and Ricardo, refused to recognise that it took the two to create the third. According to his theory of value, economic faculty, or, as he preferred to call it, "labour," is the sole origin of value; he assumed that economic desire is, like the ether, always present, and can therefore be neglected as a joint parent of value.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he overlooked all the processes by which the correspondence or union of a particular faculty with a particular desire is actually attained. To read Marx, one would think that it was only necessary to make a yard of cloth in order to create exchange value equal to the cost of production, together with a handsome surplus! In the weird Marxian world, whilst men are automata, commodities have souls; money is incarnated life, and capital has a life-process of its own! This idea of an "automaton owner," thus making profit without even being conscious of the existence of any desire to be satisfied, is, to any one who has lived within financial or industrial undertakings, in its glaring discrepancy with facts, nothing less than grotesque.

With regard to the Co-operative Movement, it was my conception that exchange value resulted from the correspondence or union of economic faculty with economic desire that gave me the clue to what was then a new idea, and what proved to be a true idea now universally accepted, namely, that the British Co-operative Movement owed its success to the fact that it was, in essence, an *organisation of consumers*, controlling the production and distribution of commodities in the interests of the consumers; and not, as had hitherto been asserted, not only by the idealists of the movement, but also by the Political Economists, an *organisation of the producers*, for the purpose of owning the instruments of production and controlling their own employment. Further, it seemed to me that this organisation of consumers did not, of itself, supply a healthy organisation of

<sup>1</sup> Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour-time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. "As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour-time." . . . (*Capital*, by Karl Marx; translation edited by Friedrich Engels, 1887, vol. 1, p. 6.)

## APPENDIX

industrial activities. To save it from internal disorder and degeneration, there needed to be some participation in control by the representatives of the various classes of producers: that, in fact, the manual workers' Trade Unions, together with the brain-workers' professional organisations, were a necessary complement to the Consumers' Co-operative Movement, as they are also to the Political State and its derivative—municipal government.

Was it fantastic to suggest that this idea of the democratic government of industry as a joint affair of consumers and producers had some affinity with the idea of exchange value being the result of a correspondence or union between economic faculty and economic desire? "The proper relationship of Trade Unionism and co-operation [so I tell a conference of Trade Union officials and co-operators in 1892] is that of an ideal marriage, in which each partner respects the individuality and assists the work of the other, whilst both cordially join forces to secure their common end—the Co-operative State."<sup>1</sup>

(E)

### WHY THE SELF-GOVERNING WORKSHOP HAS FAILED

(See page 427)

THE Special Supplement on Co-operative Production and Profit-sharing, published with the *New Statesman* of February 14, 1914, (now out of print) surveyed, up to that date, the success and failure of associations of producers in France, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Great Britain respectively. For the purpose of this analysis, associations of producers were classified under three heads—the Self-governing Workshop, Partial Autonomies (where the employees exercise no effective control) and Dependents on Co-operative Stores or other associations of consumers; capitalist profit-sharing and co-partnership schemes being dealt with in a separate section of the report.

As this Supplement is not easily accessible, I reproduce our conclusions on the causes of the ill-success of Associations of Producers generally, and of the Self-governing Workshop in particular.

A paper read at a conference of Trade Union Officials and Co-operators, Tynemouth, August 15, 1892; reprinted in *Problems of Modern Industry*, by S. and B. Webb, 1898, p. 208.



## MY APPRENTICESHIP

" If we survey, as a whole, the past three-quarters of a century of zealous and devoted work that has, in half-a-dozen different countries, been put into forming Associations of Producers which should themselves own the instruments of production and manage their own industries, it is impossible to avoid a feeling of disappointment. In none of the countries in which thousands of these societies have been started do more than hundreds exist to-day; and most of these are still in their struggling stage. They are, too, for the most part, in industries permitting of business on a small scale; and their enterprises neither employ any large numbers of workers, nor administer any considerable amount of capital. Moreover, those societies which have had any marked financial success, or have grown to any size, prove, for the most part, to have departed considerably from the form of the Self-governing Workshop—to such an extent, indeed, that it is not far off the truth to say that the chance of success seems to increase the further that form is left behind! The actual outcome of all the effort and devotion is that, even in France and Belgium, Italy and Great Britain, the countries in which alone these Associations of Producers have been successful at all, only a microscopical fraction of the manufacturing industry is to-day carried on by anything like the Self-governing Workshop, in the efficacy of which the Socialists of 1830–80 usually believed, or by any really democratically controlled Associations of Producers in any form whatsoever. Nor is it only in comparison with the capitalist organisation of industry that the Associations of Producers appear both feeble and futile. As we shall see in the second part of our Report, other forms of the democratic organisation of industry have, during the same three-quarters of a century, grown apace, and are, in some cases, increasing even more rapidly than the capitalist organisation itself.

" We cannot ascribe the failure of the Associations of Producers to the fact that they have had to depend on voluntary recruiting or that they were exposed to capitalist competition, or that they were made up of manual workers and were entirely dependent for ability on what the manual workers could supply. For all these considerations apply, as we shall see, also to the great and growing Co-operative Movement of Associations of Consumers, which has succeeded as markedly as the Associations of Producers have failed. Indeed, so far as financial and intellectual assistance from the other classes is concerned, the Associations of Producers have, at all times, in all countries, enjoyed much more help and encouragement and support than

## APPENDIX

the Association of Consumers. Similarly, of government favour, at least in France and Italy, they have had much more. In Great Britain, where the Government has done nothing for either form of Co-operation, it is the Associations of Producers that have always been patronised, advertised and eulogised by the great industrial and political magnates, as well as by the Press. It is these Associations of Producers that have always enjoyed, too, the special sympathy, encouragement and support of those other industrial organisations of the manual working class, the Trade Unions.

“ Nor can we attribute the relative ill-success of the Associations of Producers to the character of the individual workmen who have taken part in them. Alike in France and Belgium, in Italy and Great Britain, these Associations have constantly attracted many of the finest intellects and noblest characters that the wage-earners have produced. The disinterestedness, the untiring zeal, the long-suffering, patient devotion that have been put into many of these societies cannot be described otherwise than as heroic. It is sometimes suggested that these Associations have suffered from lack of capital. But in many cases capital has been forthcoming in abundance, whilst lack of capital has not prevented other working-class organisations from building up gigantic industrial enterprises, any more than it has stood in the way of individual capitalists amassing colossal fortunes out of beginnings even smaller than those of Associations of Producers.

“ We are driven to conclude, on the evidence, that the relative ill-success of Associations of Producers—their almost invariable experience of finding themselves thwarted, their high hopes disappointed, and their very continuance a perpetual struggle—is due to something in themselves, to be sought for in that which is common to them all, whatever their trades and whatever their countries. It is not merely that the manual workers seldom have at their command the sort of managerial ability that wins success in capitalist industry. As we shall see in Part II of this Report, the Associations of Consumers have proved that this difficulty can be overcome. We infer that it is the very form of Associations of Producers that is ill-adapted to survive. Applied to the democratic control of industry, such a form seems to suffer inherently from three leading disadvantages which may be seen militating against efficiency in practically all the recorded experiments. The group of workmen who make a particular commodity, though they may know all the technical processes of their industry, do not seem able, when they control their own enter-

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

prise, to secure, in a high degree, either (i) adequate workshop discipline, or (ii) the requisite knowledge of the market, or (iii) sufficient alacrity in changing processes. With regard to workshop discipline, experience seems to indicate that, with human nature as it is at present, it does not do for those who have in the workshop to obey the manager, to be, as committee-men, the direct employers of the manager. This drawback, however, might conceivably be got over by the spread of education and goodwill. More serious seems the almost necessary ignorance of the manual working producer with regard to the market for his commodities. Knowledge of the market means not only an acquaintance with the channels of trade, but also a wide and accurate appreciation of what it is that the users or consumers of the commodity really desire and appreciate—a knowledge that must not be limited merely to the statements that customers have actually made, for there is much that will never be put into words. The successful capitalist *entrepreneur*, like the representative of the consumer on the committee of a co-operative store, is always on the alert to divine and discover what each section of customers desires, *and is going to desire*.

“With regard to alacrity in changing processes, the actual producer, in any system of specialised industry—particularly if he fears to lose by the change—is at a special disadvantage just because he is himself a producer. The man who has learnt a particular art or skill, and who has spent many years of his life in a particular process, is necessarily to a large extent incapacitated from responding quickly, and without resistance, to the need for change. His very absorption in his own speciality, which has given him his high degree of technical skill, stands in his way when it is a matter of discerning and recognising the advent of a new alternative; it may be a new material, it may be a new process, it may be a new machine, it may be some entirely different commodity that serves the old purpose better. When it is at last forced upon his notice, he cannot admit that it is superior to the old; he declines to believe that the consumers can be so ill-advised as actually to prefer the new. The producer, in fact, is naturally and, as it seems, inevitably biased against a change which will be apparently to his disadvantage. The capitalist *entrepreneur* or the agent or representative of a consumers’ democracy, on the contrary, has no such bias, and is prompt to seize his advantage by the introduction of any novelty, regardless of its effect on the old style of producers.

“We think that it is these inherent drawbacks of the Self-governing Workshop, rather than any accidental or remediable

## APPENDIX

defects, that account for both the relative failure everywhere of this form of the organisation of industry, and for the interesting line of development which it has taken in Great Britain, and, to a lesser extent, also in Belgium and Germany. In France and Italy, as we have seen, the constitutions of the Associations of Producers are virtually stereotyped by the conditions which the Governments impose in return for their favours. But in Great Britain these little establishments have remained free to alter as experience has directed. What we see is that the Self-governing Workshop is hardly ever, for any length of time, a stable form. Its essential feature, the union in the same persons of manual workers and managers, hardly ever endures. It is always tending to revert to the ordinary separation of the capitalist system, of non-working capital owners who control, of a manager subject to them who directs, and of manual working wage-earners who obey. But there is, in Great Britain as in Belgium and Germany, an alternative tendency in which we see both instruction and hope. Many of the Associations of Producers have tended to become attached, as subordinate adjuncts, to a more or less formal federation of groups of Co-operative Associations of Consumers, which are able to furnish all the capital required for the most efficient production, which supply almost a 'tied' market, and which provide, on the committee of management, representatives of a working-class constituency who are not subject to the special drawbacks of the actual producers of the commodities. The manager finds in such a committee the support needed for the maintenance of discipline and for the introduction of any innovations that are called for. The manual workers themselves, though forgoing management, may retain the position of security, independence and personal dignity which participation in ownership can afford. This is the position into which, as we have shown, the Hebden Bridge Manufacturing Co., the co-operative printing societies of Manchester and Leicester, and a whole group of other successful Associations of Producers, have unconsciously drifted. This is the position, as we believe, such of the other British Associations of Producers as survive will more and more tend to assume. A similar tendency, we note, is remarked by M. Vandervelde among those of Belgium."<sup>1</sup> [*The New Statesman*; Special Supplement on Co-operative Production and Profit-sharing; February 14, 1914, pp. 20-22.]

Five years after this Supplement was published, there came, in

<sup>1</sup> Emile Vandervelde, *La Coopération neutre et la Coopération socialiste*.

## MY APPRENTICESHIP

Great Britain, out of what was called Guild Socialism, in 1919-23, a remarkable recrudescence of substantially the old kind of Associations of Producers. Ignoring the repeated experiences of the preceding ninety years, enthusiasts formed dozens of little "guilds" of builders, tailors, printers, furniture makers, etc., which seem to me to have had the same characteristics as their innumerable predecessors. If anything, their failure was more complete and catastrophic. A full and candid description of this latest experiment in Associations of Producers would be of great value.

There is one thing that, after further reflection, I would add to our repeated examination, between 1888 and 1923, of the attempts to carry on industry by associations of any kind, whether of producers or of consumers or of capitalists. Neither an invention nor a work of art emanates from group government, whether of producers or consumers or of profit-seeking shareholders. Given the appropriate basis for group government, all sorts of industrial operations may be successfully conducted, indefinitely expanded, and endlessly developed in range and variety, without forgoing democratic control, and with even greater security and continuity than profit-making capitalism. The collectively controlled enterprise may be, as experience has demonstrated, quick to adopt a new invention, enterprising in experiment, and courageously patient in trial until success is attained. But invention, like artistic production, must be the work of an individual mind; or, very occasionally, of the free interplay of the minds of two or three co-workers, untrammelled by any "management," whether co-operative or governmental or capitalistic. How far and by what means social organisation can promote and increase either inventive or artistic genius deserves further study. The inventor or the artist must have sufficient leisure of body and mind, and sufficient freedom from the incessant anxieties as to daily bread, to set his spirit free. Too severe and too prolonged a penury depresses genius, and finally kills off its possessors. On the other hand, the possession of wealth, and especially the inheritance of wealth, seems almost invariably to sterilise genius. It is hard for even the most diligent enquirer in all countries, down all the centuries, to discover even half-a-dozen inventors or artists of genius who have found themselves, on arriving at manhood, in possession of any considerable wealth. It must, I think, be admitted that, for those without a competence, neither patents nor copyrights work satisfactorily in furnishing genius with its opportunity. Nor can we conclude that governments and co-operative societies

## APPENDIX

are more successful patrons of inventive or artistic genius, especially when it breaks out in new and unexpected lines, than profit-making capitalism. How much can be done for genius by universal education; by scholarships and fellowships (which might be instituted in connection with great industrial undertakings as well as universities); by lightly tasked professorships and even sinecure appointments with no other duties than observation and reflection; by "measurement and publicity," and even experimental execution at the public expense, must be left to other students to explore.



## INDEX

- Acland, Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur Dyke, 460
- Administrative Nihilism, 56, 190, 204, 209-21, 356, 374-84, 388-9
- Aked family, the, 178-80, 188-93, 195-6
- Allen, Grant, 52
- Anti-Corn Law League, 18, 39
- Arnold, Dr., 85
- Arnold, Matthew, 441, 444
- Art, provision for, 496 7
- Asquith, Rt. Hon. H. H., *see* Oxford and Asquith, Earl of
- Asquith, Mrs. M., *see* Oxford and Asquith, Countess of
- Aves, Ernest, 304
- Bacup, working-class cousins at, 177-96
- Bagehot, Walter, 482
- Balfour, Earl of, 202, 351
- Barnett, Canon and Dame Henrietta, 103, 200, 206, 222, 224, 226, 233-42, 303, 308, 312-3, 321-3, 326, 335, 359
- Baylis, Lilian, 315
- Beaconsfield, Earl of, 25, 84
- Beesly, E. S., 265, 341
- Beringer, Oscar, 99
- Bernstein, Edouard, 349
- Besant, Annie, 368, 452
- Birth Control, 349; relation of, to destitution, 297
- Blandford, Thomas, 411
- Bond, Edward, 312, 320, 323
- Booth, Rt. Hon. Charles, 34, 201, 235, 263-76, 278, 280-2, 284, 287-90, 292-6, 298-300, 302-4, 306, 317, 334-6, 341, 343, 354, 357-60, 363-4, 378, 386, 393, 396-7, 453, 456, 461, 487-8
- Booth, Mary, 201, 264, 268, 270, 303-4, 341, 343, 456
- Bowley, A. L., 295
- Bradlaugh, Charles, 133, 154, 204, 349
- Brassey, Thomas, 21-2
- Brentano, Luigi, 439
- Bright, Rt. Hon. John, 18, 26, 30, 148, 204
- Brockway, Fenner, 173
- Burnett, John, 362, 366, 376-7, 414, 416-7, 420, 456
- Burns, Rt. Hon. John, 452, 456
- Buxton, Rt. Hon. Sydney (afterwards Earl Buxton), 460
- Cairnes, John Elliot, 425
- Capitalist enterprise: my father's connection with, 19-22; ethics of, 23-4; attitude of Charles Booth to, 267; relation of, to poverty, 270, 283-4, 291-2; the sweating system and, 357-86; relation of, to economic science, 483-4; description of, 344-86
- Carlyle, Thomas, 27, 41, 200, 204, 206, 468
- Census, use of, by Charles Booth, 272-83
- Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph, 146-51, 187, 192, 202, 275, 368
- Charity, *see* Philanthropy
- Charity Organisation Society, 175, 222-5, 229, 231-4, 242, 269, 279, 288, 299, 300, 306, 309, 312, 315, 335
- Chevaier, Michel, 31-2
- Children, condition of, 296; violation of, 368
- Churchill, Lord Randolph, 72, 202



# INDEX

- Clark, Sir Andrew, 342  
 Clarke, William, 460  
 Cobden, Richard, 18, 26  
 Comte, Auguste, 75, 167, 169,  
 170, 172-3, 218, 240, 265, 319,  
 453  
 Cons, Emma, 233, 315-6, 321  
 Co-operation, Consumers', 176,  
 182, 185, 191, 402-38, 490-1;  
 the Self-governing Workshop,  
 411-3, 424-7, 434, 491-7;  
 Annual Congress of Movement,  
 414, 442, 457, 459; rival schools  
 of, 423-35  
*Co-operative News*, 404  
 Co-operative Wholesale Society,  
 334, 406-10, 414, 417-9, 427,  
 431-2, 434, 436-8, 443  
 Co-operative Union, 408-9, 433  
 Courtney of Penwith, Lady,  
 84-9, 91-3, 103, 115, 198, 200,  
 308, 351-2, 454  
 Courtney of Penwith, Lord, 200,  
 343, 351-2  
 Creighton, Mandell (Bishop of  
 London), and Mrs. Louise  
 Creighton, 397  
 Crimean War, wooden huts for,  
 20-1  
 Cripps (Potter), Blanche, 96, 159  
 Cripps, Charles Alfred, *see*  
 Parmoor, Lord  
 Cripps (Potter), Theresa, 162, 200,  
 220  
 Cripps, William Harrison, 159-62  
 "Dada," *see* Mills, Martha  
 Darwin, Charles, 112, 243, 268,  
 348, 453  
 Dent, J. J., 416-21, 450  
 Diaries, MS., beginning of, 81;  
 use of, 327-9  
 Dilke, Mrs. Ashton, 401  
 Dilke, Rt. Hon. Sir Charles, and  
 Lady Dilke, 385  
 Dobbs (Potter), Rosalind  
 Heyworth, 132, 135, 177, 329,  
 364  
 Docks, London, 321, 343-5, 356,  
 444, 486  
 Drink, 326, 458  
 Dunraven, Earl of, 372-3, 376  
 East End Dwellings Company,  
 308-26  
 Eccles Manufacturing Society, 411  
 Ego that affirms and the Ego that  
 denies, the, 15-6, 114, 126, 172,  
 220, 391-2  
 Eliot, George, 47-9, 76, 123, 167,  
 313  
 Eliot, Canon, 97, 99, 101  
 Ellicott, C. J. (Bishop of Glou-  
 cester), 75  
 Fabian Society, 51, 205, 303, 395,  
 409, 442, 451-8  
 Factory and Workshop Acts, *see*  
 State regulation  
 Fawcett, Mrs. M. G., 351, 401  
 Fay, C. R., 399  
 Fisher, Ariabella, 341  
 Foreign Immigration, 298, 355,  
 377-8 (*see also* Jews)  
 Froude, James Anthony, 41  
 Galton, Francis, 76, 145, 157-8,  
 268  
 Garnett, Dr Richard, 323  
 George, Henry, 205, 207, 209  
 Gladstone, Rt Hon. W. E., 84,  
 192, 201-2, 210, 328, 351, 353,  
 356  
 Goethe, Wolfgang von, 93, 116,  
 119, 161  
 Granville, Earl, 351-2  
 Gray, J. C., 408, 453  
 Green, Alice Stopford (Mrs. J.  
 R.), 368, 460  
 Grey of Fallodon, Viscount, 460  
 Guild Socialism, 496  
 Haldane, Viscount, 460  
 Hammond, J. L., 352  
 Harrison, Frederic, and Mrs.  
 Harrison, 75, 168-9, 173, 265,  
 368, 401, 458  
 Hebden Bridge Fustian Manu-  
 facturing Society, 406, 408, 495  
 Herbert, Hon. Auberon, 213-7,  
 267, 368, 446

# INDEX

- Heyworth (family of), 18-9, 30-1, 39, 176-80, 184-5, 192
- Heyworth, Lawrence, 18-9, 30-1, 39, 176-7, 180
- Heyworth, Lawrencina (afterwards Mrs. R. Potter), 31, 39, 41, 176-7
- Hill, Octavia, 93, 115, 200, 222, 224, 233, 240, 269, 309-10, 315, 323, 326
- Hobhouse, Rt. Hon Henry, 172, 200, 352
- Hobhouse, Lord, 352
- Hobhouse (Potter), Margaret, 92, 95, 102-3, 115, 157, 167, 169-71, 200
- Hobhouse, Stephen, 173
- Hodgskin, Thomas, 428, 490
- Hodgson, Brian Houghton, 105, 107-8
- Holt (Potter), Laurencina, 265
- Holt, Robert Durning, 265
- Hooker, Sir Joseph, 76, 107, 157, 243
- Housing, working-class, 308-26
- Hughes, Thomas, 419, 425, 434
- Huxley, Thomas Henry, 41, 45-6, 76, 157, 347-8, 353
- Hyndman, H. M., 206-8
- Incest, prevalence of, 368
- Individualism, *see* Administrative Nihilism
- Industrial Revolution, the, 18, 204, 390, 393
- Interview, the method of, *see* Social science
- Invention, provision for, 496
- Jackson, Martha, *see* Mills, Martha
- Jeune, Dr. (Bishop of Peterborough), 20, 29
- Jews, the, 30, 81, 360, 366, 488
- Jones, Benjamin, 334, 350, 403, 411, 416-21, 427
- Kingsley, Charles (Canon of Westminster), 205, 315, 425
- Knowles, Sir James, 47, 357, 401
- Labour, 60, 69, 70, 199; the cotton operatives, 178-95; classification of, according to occupation, 288-92; casual, 313-8, 346-7, 485-6 (*see also* Trade Unionism)
- Labour Party, 201-13
- Lecky, W. E. H., 454
- Levy, Amy, 447
- Lewes, George Henry, 76, 124, 156, 161, 167
- Lewis, Sir George Cornewall, 29
- Local Government, *see* Municipal enterprise
- Loch, Sir Charles Stewart, 223, 233, 237, 335
- London Society, 64-73, 96, 102, 141-6, 152, 486
- Ludlow, John Malcolm, 425-6
- Macaulay, Charles Zachary, 264-5
- Macaulay, Lord, 106-7
- Macaulay, Mary, *see* Booth, Mary
- Mann, Tom, 452, 456
- Manning, H. E. (Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster), 76, 205, 208
- Marshall, Alfred, 337, 398-400, 415, 420-1, 425, 432, 458, 487
- Marshall, Mrs. Alfred, 421
- Marx, Eleanor, 348-9
- Marx, Karl, 204, 337, 339, 341, 348-9, 428, 490
- Massingham, H. W., 458, 460
- Mathematics (and a ghost), 129, 130
- Maurice, F. D., 205, 240, 425-6
- Maxwell, Sir William, 421, 436
- Meinertzhagen, Daniel, 157, 343, 449
- Meinertzhagen (Potter), Georgina, 18, 85, 95, 129, 157, 343
- "Middleman," the, 374-6, 379-82
- Mill, John Stuart, 167, 204-5, 410, 425, 454, 458
- Mills (Jackson), Martha ("Da-da"), 35-8, 176-9

# INDEX

Mitchell, John T. W., 406-10,  
414-6, 420, 429, 434-5  
Monkswell, Lord, 372,  
Morley, Viscount, 138, 201, 203,  
351-3, 368  
Mormonism, 88-91  
Morris, William, 204, 206-8  
Municipal enterprise, 185-6, 192,  
201-3, 235, 293, 301, 304, 437,  
442, 450, 483  
  
Napoleon, Louis (Emperor of  
the French), 20-1  
Nash, Vaughan, 419, 457  
Neale, Edward Vansittart, 409-  
10, 425, 433  
Nevinson, H. W., 307  
Newton, Sir Charles, 323  
Nonconformist chapels, 176-91  
  
Olivier, Lord, 460  
Owen, Robert, 167, 430  
Oxford and Asquith, Earl of, 204,  
460; Countess of, 67  
  
Parasitic social classes, *see* Docks;  
Labour (casual); London  
Society  
Parnmoor, Lord, 162, 200, 220, 321,  
341, 344  
Paul, Maurice Eden, 317, 334  
Pensions, Old Age, 235, 237, 304  
Philanthropy, 221-43, 298-9  
Playne, Arthur, 87-9, 91, 446  
Playne (Potter), Mary, 87, 129,  
130, 192, 195, 364, 446  
Political economy, 31-2, 338-42,  
482, 491  
Politics, 25-6, 84, 146-51, 201-21,  
351-3, 401, 450-1, 460  
Ponsonby, Arthur, 327, 357  
Potter, Blanche, *see* Cripps,  
Blanche  
Potter, Catherine (Kate, Kitty),  
*see* Courtney of Penwith, Lady  
Potter, Georgina, *see* Meinertzhagen, Georgina  
Potter, Laurencina (sister of  
Beatrice Potter), *see* Holt,  
Laurencina

Potter, Laurencina (mother of  
Beatrice Potter), 31-42, 125,  
177, 180, 333  
Potter, Margaret, *see* Hobhouse,  
Margaret  
Potter, Mary, *see* Playne, Mary  
Potter, Richard (father of Beatrice  
Potter), 18-28, 39-43, 61, 74-6,  
94, 125, 130, 135-6, 138, 190-5,  
199, 329, 342-3, 364, 444, 446,  
448-9, 455, 462  
Potter, Richard (grandfather of  
Beatrice Potter), 18, 30  
Porter, Rosalind, *see* Dobbs,  
Rosalind  
Potter, Theresa, *see* Cripps,  
Theresa  
Poverty, 198, Charles Booth's  
enquiry into, 263-94, 496 (*see*  
*also* Socialism)  
Price, W. E., 19  
Psychology, 131; riddle of, 160-2,  
337  
Pycroft, Ella, 308, 313, 316-8, 323  
-5, 346  
  
Raven, Charles E., 426  
Reade, Winwood, 155  
Redfern, Percy, 406, 429  
Religion, 15-6; of the household  
saint, 37-8; decay of Christi-  
anity, 73-4; personal ex-  
perience, 83, 95-127, 331;  
doctrine of the Atonement,  
97-8, 101; Buddhism, 104-11;  
Protestantism, 121; the Roman  
Catholic Church, 122-4; sacra-  
mental Christianity, 125; the  
religion of humanity, 166-73,  
265; of my working-class  
relations, 187, 194, 196; alms-  
giving as religious exercise, 225;  
of Samuel Barnett, 236-8  
Rent collecting, *see* Housing  
Ricardo, David, 342, 428, 482-  
4, 487, 490  
Rochdale Manufacturing Com-  
pany, 418  
Rochdale Pioneers' Society, 418,  
428-32

# INDEX

- Ross, Sir Ronald, 307-8  
 Rowntree, B. Seebohm, 295  
 Russell, Hon. Bertrand, 112
- Schloss, David L., 419  
 School attendance officers, 275-9, 350  
 Schools, elementary, good effects of the, 301  
 Schreiner, Olive, 195  
 Science, 15-6, 54-7, 76; optimism of, 113; agnosticism of, 119, 153-66; method of, 155-8; halls of, 154, 348  
 Senior, Nassau W., 20, 31  
 Shaw, G. Bernard, 451, 460  
 Smith, Adam, 337, 394  
 Smith, Sir Hubert Llewellyn, 298, 303  
 Smith, Logan Pearsall, 128, 458  
 Social Democratic Federation, 348  
 Social environment, my own, 59-127, 198, of the poor, 283-6  
 Social science, possibility of a, 15-6; complexity of, 163-5; note-taking, art of, 403, 472-82; method of wholesale interviewing, 275; method of the interview, 136, 469-72; Francis Galton's method in, 157-8; Charles Booth's contribution to, 263-305; social diagnosis as the basis of, 317, 336-7, 386, 391, 464  
 Socialism, 204-10, 234-6, 300, 393-462; successive stages in, 439-43; of Karl Marx, 490  
 Souvestre, Marie, 368-9, 397  
 Spencer, Herbert, 28, 32, 38, 40-57, 76, 103, 109, 111, 113, 118, 121, 140, 146, 157, 160, 162-3, 210-1, 214, 218, 319, 320, 333, 336, 340-2, 347, 365, 388, 453  
 State enterprise, 441-3, 484  
 State regulation, 56, 169, 189-190, 203, 234-5, 304, 356, 358, 379, 384  
 Statistics, *see* Social science  
 Sweating system, 357-86; House of Lords Committee on, 372-6, 487-8
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 116  
 Taine, Henri, 32, 319  
 Tawney, R. H., 385  
 Thompson, William, 428, 490  
 Thring, Lord, 372-3, 376  
 Tillett, Benjamin, 355, 452, 456  
 Toynbee, Arnold, 205, 208-9  
 Toynbee Hall, 206, 236  
 Trade Boards, 304, 385  
 Trade Unionism, 69, 70, 169, 175, 199, need for, 379, 435-8, 445, 461-2
- Unemployment, 330, 345-7, 439, 467  
 United States, 24, 147, 440, 487-8; visit to, 85-92  
 Utilitarians, economics of the, 31; ethics of the, 57
- Value, Theory of, 339, 489-90  
 Vandervelde, Emile, 495
- Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 400  
 Webb, Sidney (The Other One), 51, 131, 168, 332, 371, 397, 449-53, 456-62  
 White, Arnold, 375  
 Williams, Arthur Dyson, 364  
 Wolf, A., 293  
 Women's Movement, the 315-6, 323-4, 396-402, 420-1



# INDEX

- Ross, Sir Ronald, 307-8  
 Rowntree, B. Seebohm, 295  
 Russell, Hon. Bertrand, 112
- Schloss, David L., 419  
 School attendance officers, 275-9, 350  
 Schools, elementary, good effects of the, 301  
 Schreiner, Olive, 195  
 Science, 15-6, 54-7, 76; optimism of, 113, agnosticism of, 119, 153-66; method of, 155-8; halls of, 154, 348  
 Senior, Nassau W., 20, 31  
 Shaw, G. Bernard, 451, 460  
 Smith, Adam, 337, 394  
 Smith, Sir Hubert Llewellyn, 298, 303  
 Smith, Logan Pearsall, 128, 458  
 Social Democratic Federation, 348  
 Social environment, my own, 59-127, 198, of the poor, 283-6  
 Social science, possibility of a, 15-6; complexity of, 163-5; note-taking, art of, 403, 472-82; method of wholesale interviewing, 275; method of the interview, 136, 469-72; Francis Galton's method in, 157-8; Charles Booth's contribution to, 263-305; social diagnosis as the basis of, 317, 336-7, 386, 391, 464  
 Socialism, 204-10, 234-6, 300, 393-462; successive stages in, 439-43; of Karl Marx, 490  
 Souvestre, Marie, 368-9, 397  
 Spencer, Herbert, 28, 32, 38, 40-57, 76, 103, 109, 111, 113, 118, 121, 140, 146, 157, 160, 162-3, 210-1, 214, 218, 319, 320, 333, 336, 340-2, 347, 365, 388, 453  
 State enterprise, 441-3, 484  
 State regulation, 56, 169, 189-190, 203, 234-5, 304, 356, 358, 379, 384  
 Statistics, *see* Social science  
 Sweating system, 357-86; House of Lords Committee on, 372-6, 487-8
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 116  
 Taine, Henri, 32, 319  
 Tawney, R. H., 385  
 Thompson, William, 428, 490  
 Thring, Lord, 372-3, 376  
 Tillett, Benjamin, 355, 452, 456  
 Toynbee, Arnold, 205, 208-9  
 Toynbee Hall, 206, 236  
 Trade Boards, 304, 385  
 Trade Unionism, 69, 70, 169, 175, 199, need for, 379, 435-8, 445, 461-2
- Unemployment, 330, 345-7, 439, 467  
 United States, 24, 147, 440, 487-8; visit to, 85-92  
 Utilitarians, economics of the, 31; ethics of the, 57
- Value, Theory of, 339, 489-90  
 Vandervelde, Emile, 495
- Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 400  
 Webb, Sidney (The Other One), 51, 131, 168, 332, 371, 397, 449-53, 456-62  
 White, Arnold, 375  
 Williams, Arthur Dyson, 364  
 Wolf, A., 293  
 Women's Movement, the 315-6, 323-4, 396-402, 420-1

# PENGUIN BOOKS

COMPLETE LIST OF PUBLICATIONS TO THE END OF 1938

## FICTION orange covers

- "Bartimeus" A Tall Ship  
 Ralph Bates (2 vols) Lean Men  
 Helen Beauchlerk Green Lacquer Pavilion  
 Arnold Bennett Clayhanger  
 J. D. Beresford Hampdenshire Wonder  
 Algernon Blackwood The Centaur  
 Phyllis Bottome Private Worlds  
 Marjorie Bowen The Glen O'Weeping  
 Ernest Bramah Kai Lung Unrolls His Mat  
 The Wallet of Kai Lung  
 Kai Lung's Golden Hours  
 Peking Picnic  
 Ann Bridge  
 Louis Bromfield  
 The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg  
 D. K. Broster Sir Isumbras at the Ford  
 Donn Byrne Hangman's House  
 J. L. Campbell The Miracle of Peille  
 G. K. Chesterton  
 The Man Who Was Thursday  
 Susan Ertz Madame Claire  
 Now East, Now West  
 William Faulkner Soldiers' Pay  
 E. M. Forster A Passage to India  
 Leonhard Frank Carl and Anna  
 Crosbie Garstin The Owls' House  
 Stella Gibbons Cold Comfort Farm  
 John Hampson  
 Saturday Night at the Greyhound  
 Ian Hay A Safety Match  
 Ernest Hemingway A Farewell to Arms  
 Robert Hichens (2 vols) Paradise Case  
 James Hilton Dawn of Reckoning  
 Constance Holme The Lonely Plough  
 Claude Houghton Chaos Is Come Again  
 I Am Jonathan Scrivener  
 W. H. Hudson The Purple Land  
 Aldous Huxley Crome Yellow  
 Margaret Irwin  
 Still She Wished for Company  
 W. W. Jacobs Deep Waters  
 M. R. James Ghost Stories of an Antiquary  
 Sinclair Lewis Mantrap  
 Rose Macaulay Crewe Train  
 Dangerous Ages  
 Philip Macdonald Patrol  
 Denis Mackail Greenery Street

- Ethel Mannin Children of the Earth  
 Venetian Blinds  
 R. H. Mottram The Spanish Farm  
 Beverley Nichols Self  
 Liam O'Flaherty The Informer  
 T. F. Powys Mr Weston's Good Wine  
 D. Kilham Roberts (editor)  
 Penguin Parade (1)  
 Penguin Parade (2)  
 Penguin Parade (3)  
 Penguin Parade (4)  
 E. Arnot Robertson Four Frightened People  
 V. Sackville-West The Edwardians  
 Ramon Sender Seven Red Sundays  
 Graham Seton The W Plan  
 Beatrice Kean Seymour Three Wives  
 Youth Rides Out  
 Edward Shanks (2 vols) Queer Street  
 Ignazio Silone Fontamara  
 Osbert Sitwell Before the Bombardment  
 Somerville and Ross  
 Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.  
 Alan Steele (editor)  
 Selected Modern Short Stories (1)  
 Selected Modern Short Stories (2)  
 Ralph Straus Unseemly Adventure  
 Tchekov Tales from Tchekov  
 Angela Thirkell Wild Strawberries  
 Edward Thompson An Indian Day  
 Ben Travers A Cuckoo in the Nest  
 Hugh Walpole Mr Perrin and Mr Traill  
 Sylvia Townsend Warner Lolly Willows  
 Evelyn Waugh Black Mischief  
 Decline and Fall  
 Vile Bodies  
 Edith Wharton Ethan Frome  
 Henry Williamson Tarka the Otter  
 P. G. Wodehouse My Man Jeeves  
 E. H. Young William  
 Francis Brett Young The Black Diamond  
 The Crescent Moon  
**CRIME FICTION green covers**  
 Anthony Armstrong Ten Minute Alibi  
 H. C. Bailey Mr Fortune, Please  
 E. C. Bentley Trent's Last Case  
 Anthony Berkeley The Piccadilly Murder  
 The Poisoned Chocolates Case



# **“In the present state of medical knowledge”**

“In the present state of medical knowledge”, doctors universally admit, “as yet we have discovered comparatively little about laws governing health and sickness. But one thing is evident : that nervous health can be maintained and restored only by providing an adequate supply of organic phosphorus and proteid to feed the nerves and blood.”

‘Sanatogen’ supplies organic phosphorus and proteid in their most easily assimilable forms. It nourishes and repairs worn nerves. It builds new, strong, red corpuscles to replenish vitiated blood. It overcomes the weakening effects of illness and maintains vigorous health and strength.

*Live up to life this year: take an eight weeks' course of*

## **‘SANATOGEN’**

A brand of Casein and Sodium Glycero-phosphate

(Trade Mark)

### **THE NERVE TONIC FOOD**

Obtainable at all chemists in 19/9 jars (8 weeks' course) and 2/3, 3/3, 5/9 and 10/9 tins. A ‘Genatosan’ product made by Genatosan Ltd., Loughborough, Leicestershire.

M & C



## COMPLETE LIST OF PENGUIN BOOKS (contd)

Alice Campbell *Spider Web*  
 John Dickson Carr *It Walks by Night*  
                                   *The Waxworks Murder*  
 Agatha Christie *The Murder on the Links*  
                                   *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*  
 G. D. H. and Margaret Cole  
                                   *Murder at Crome House*  
 J. J. Connington *The Dangerfield Talisman*  
                                   *Death at Swaythling Court*  
 A. Conan Doyle  
                                   *The Hound of the Baskervilles*  
 John Ferguson *The Man in the Dark*  
 Richard Keverne *The Havering Plot*  
                                   *The Man in the Red Hat*  
                                   *The Sanfield Scandal*  
 C. Daly King *Obelisks at Sea*  
 Philip Macdonald *The Rasp*  
 Ngaio Marsh *Enter a Murderer*  
 A. A. Milne *The Red House Mystery*  
 John Rhode *The House on Tollard Ridge*  
                                   *The Murders in Praed Street*  
 Sax Rohmer *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*  
 Dorothy L. Sayers  
                                   *The Documents in the Case*  
                                   *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*  
 W. Stanley Sykes *The Missing Moneylender*  
 Edgar Wallace *The Four Just Men*  
 H. G. Wells *The Invisible Man*

### TRAVEL & ADVENTURE *cerise covers*

J. Johnston Abraham *The Surgeon's Log*  
 W. A. Bishop *Winged Warfare*  
 Edmund Blunden *Undertones of War*  
 F. S. Chapman *Watkins' Last Expedition*  
 Apsley Cherry-Garrard  
                                   *(2 vols.) The Worst Journey in the World*  
 Alexandra David-Neel  
                                   *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*  
 Anthony Fokker *Flying Dutchman*  
 Rosita Forbes *The Secret of the Sahara*  
 Alfred Aloysius Horn *Trader Horn*  
 Anne Morrow Lindbergh  
                                   *North to the Orient*  
 C. A. W. Monckton  
                                   *(2 vols.) Some Experiences of a New*  
                                   *Guinea Resident Magistrate*  
 Eric Muspratt *My South Sea Island*

J. M. Scott *The Land that God Gave Cain*  
 Captain von Rintelen *The Dark Invader*  
 Nora Wain *House of Exile*

### BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIRS *dark blue covers*

H. C. Armstrong  
                                   *Grey Wolf (Mustafa Kemal)*  
                                   *Lord of Arabia (Ibn Saud)*  
 Margot Asquith *(2 vols.) Autobiography*  
 E. F. Benson *As We Were*  
 Charlton *"Charlton"*  
 Pamela Frankau *I Find Four People*  
 B. H. Liddell Hart *(2 vols.) Foch*  
 Ethel Mannin *Confessions and Impressions*  
 André Maurois *Ariel*  
                                   *Disraeli*  
 Beverley Nichols *Twenty-Five*  
 Maurice O'Sullivan  
                                   *Twenty Years A-Growing*

### MISCELLANEOUS *yellow covers*

Earl Baldwin *On England*  
 Francis and Vera Meynell (editors)  
                                   *(2 vols.) The Week-end Book*  
 Alexander Woolcott *While Rome Burns*

### DRAMA *red covers*

THE PENGUIN SHAKESPEARE, edited by Dr G. B. Harrison, these plays, each in a separate volume with special Notes and Introductions, are available so far:

*Twelfth Night* *Henry the Fifth*  
*Hamlet* *As You Like It*  
*King Lear* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*The Tempest* *The Merchant of Venice*  
*Richard II* *Romeo and Juliet*  
*Julius Caesar* *Henry IV (part 1)*  
*Macbeth* *Henry IV (part 2)*  
*Othello* *Much Ado About Nothing*  
*The Sonnets* *Antony and Cleopatra*

SEVEN FAMOUS ONE-ACT PLAYS, by Alfred Sutro, A. P. Herbert, Clifford Bax, Stanley Houghton, W. W. Jacobs, J. A. Ferguson, and Oliphant Down.

## ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS ★

Art Director: Robert Gibbings;  
Introductions by G. B. Harrison

- Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice*  
(illustrated by Helen Binyon)
- Robert Browning  
*Selected Poems* (Iain Macnab)
- Daniel Defoe  
(2 vols.) *Robinson Crusoe* (J. R. Biggs)
- Richard Jefferies  
*The Story of My Heart* (Gertrude Hermes)
- Herman Melville *Typee* (Robert Gibbings)
- Edgar Allan Poe  
*Some Tales of Mystery and Imagination*  
(Douglas Percy Bliss)
- Laurence Sterne  
*A Sentimental Journey* (Gwen Raverat)
- Jonathan Swift  
*Gulliver's Travels* (Theodore Naish)
- David Thoreau *Walden* (Ethelbert White)

## PENGUIN SPECIALS

- The Duchess of Atholl *Searchlight on Spain*
- Phyllis Bottome *Mortal Storm*
- Acheson Best *What Hitler Wants*
- Charlton, Garratt, and Fletcher  
*The Air Defence of Britain*
- S. Grant Duff *What Price Czechoslovakia?*
- Louis Golding *The Jews*
- G. T. Garratt *Mussolini's Roman Empire*
- Konrad Heiden *One Man Against Europe*
- J. M. D. Pringle *China Struggles for Unity*
- Edgar Mowrer *Germany Puts the Clock Back*  
*A new book on the Far East*
- Geneviève Tabouis *Blackmail or War*

## PELICAN BOOKS

light blue covers

- F. L. Allen ★ (2 vols.) *Only Yesterday*
- Clive Bell *Civilisation*

- G. D. H. Cole *Practical Economics*  
*Socialism in Evolution*
- J. G. Crowther  
★ (2 vols.) *An Outline of the Universe*
- Dobrée and Manwaring  
*The Floating Republic*
- J. H. Fabre ★ *Social Life in the Insect World*
- Sigmund Freud *Totem and Taboo*  
*Psychopathology of Everyday Life*
- Roger Fry *Vision and Design*
- J. B. S. Haldane *The Inequality of Man*
- Elie Halevy (3 vols.)  
*A History of the English People in 1815*
- G. B. Harrison (editor)  
*A Book of English Poetry*
- Julian Huxley *Essays in Popular Science*
- Sir James Jeans ★ *The Mysterious Universe*
- R. S. Lambert (editor) ★ *Art in England*
- H. J. Laski *Liberty in the Modern State*
- H. J. and Hugh Massingham (editors)  
(2 vols.) *The Great Victorians*
- W. J. Perry *The Growth of Civilisation*
- Eileen Power ★ *Medieval People*
- D. K. Roberts (editor)  
(2 vols.) *The Century's Poetry*
- Bernard Shaw  
(2 vols.) *The Intelligent Woman's Guide*
- Olaf Stapledon *Last and First Men*
- J. W. N. Sullivan *Limitations of Science*
- R. H. Tawney  
*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*
- Beatrice Webb  
(2 vols.) *My Apprenticeship*
- H. G. Wells *A Short History of the World*
- A. N. Whitehead  
*Science and the Modern World*
- Leonard Woolf *After the Deluge*
- Virginia Woolf *The Common Reader*
- Sir Leonard Woolley ★ *Ur of the Chaldees*  
★ *Digging up the Past*

## PELICAN SPECIALS

- Arnold Bennett *Literary Taste*
- Arnold Haskell ★ *Ballet*
- Peter Thoenes ★ *Modern German Art*

★ ILLUSTRATED

# All is not gold . . .

*Make sure you are buying a Penguin or a Pelican when you buy a 6d. book. The Penguin and the Pelican are hall-marks of excellence ; only books bearing one of these imprints are published by us.*